

Two Sides of the Same Coin:
The Duality of Responsible Gaming within the
Dutch Gambling Market

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary society, gambling firms are put under both lawful and societal pressure as they are expected to positively contribute to society, extending beyond focusing on their profit (Carroll, 2015). This growing appeal for corporate social responsibility (CSR) has constituted prominence among organizations and scholars, resulting in an abundance of scrutiny among both parties (Christensen, Morsing & Thyssen, 2013). In the gambling sector, it is argued that CSR refers to the responsibility of diminishing the adverse corporate footprint of gambling products; negative effects which could ultimately lead to gambling addiction. Naturally, the increasing importance of CSR has gone hand in hand with the growing corporate desire to minimize (further) societal harm caused by the gambling sector. The current research aims to explore this explicit sense of corporate responsibility, which is addressed through responsible gaming (RG) strategies. This research contributes to a better understanding of the stakeholder perspective of Responsible Gaming in the context of the Dutch gambling sector. More specifically, a qualitative in-depth interview method is utilized to explore how internal and external stakeholders in the Dutch lottery sector value and regard the concept of Responsible Gaming in relation to CSR. In turn, the research question is explored: ‘How do CSR-based responsible gaming strategies impact the perspective of stakeholders in the Dutch lottery sector?’. Through a thematic analysis, the results suggest that responsible gaming is becoming more important among all stakeholders, yet there is an internal clash between company goals, as making a profit is often a bigger priority. In addition, although internal responsible gaming communication strategies are established, the external communication strategies are marginal and employees are still looking for ways to effectively implement said strategies. Moreover, stakeholders raise conflicting thoughts on the notion of RG as a unique selling point (USP). Finally, the value of responsible gaming in relation to the anticipated liberalization of the Dutch online gambling market, expected in 2021, is growing at a rapid pace. The stakeholders note several anticipated changes for the liberalized gambling market, being a. an increase in competitive providers, b. a higher total amount of players, c. a higher gambling sensitivity of the product offer, d. an expected growth of gambling addicts in the Dutch market. Altogether, the current research offers a conceptual bridge between what is known about the responsible gaming efforts in the gambling sector, and the lesser-known internal and external stakeholder perspectives toward these efforts.

KEYWORDS: *Corporate Social Responsibility, Stakeholder theory, Corporate Reputation Management, Responsible Gaming, Gambling sector*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary socio-economic landscape, corporations are pressured to expand their remit beyond shareholder value, as they are expected to strive for corporate results that excel profit generation (Liang & Renneboog, 2017). Consequently, an increasing quantity of organizations aim to implement corporate social responsibility (CSR) within their organizational strategies, which is considered a way to contribute to society (Carroll, 2015). This notion of CSR refers to the “company actions that advance social good beyond that which is required by law” (Kang, Germann & Grewal, 2016, p. 59). In the past decades, the concept of CSR has drawn elevating interest from practitioners and academics alike. Research by Ipsos (2013) reports that 77% of consumers think that corporations should be putting more effort into contributing to society, while findings by Reputation Intelligence (2013) indicate that 73% of consumers within the fifteen largest global markets will recommend corporations that deliver on CSR. Subsequently, the concept of CSR has received extensive scrutiny addressing the variety of options for corporate engagement in mainstream society and local communities (Wang et al., 2016). However, although the concept received close examination, the concept remained ambiguous among scholars and in practice. Consequently, to gain a better understanding of CSR and its organizational value, the current research aims to examine the concept of CSR in a specific social-economic context: the Dutch gambling industry.

In contemporary society, gambling takes on a central role which is accompanied by a dual societal prejudice. This long-established main form of entertainment has been a pastime for many, yet a means to wealth only destined to the lucky few. As many people aspire to become one of these lucky ones, the gambling industry brings along a vast and profitable industry (Jensen, 2017). However, gambling addiction lingers as a negative consequence of these money-driven societal aspirations (Dickerson, 2003). Therefore, gambling firms are put under both lawful and societal pressure as they are expected to positively contribute to society, aside from solely focusing on their profit (Carroll, 2015). This growing appeal for CSR has constituted prominence among organizations and scholars, resulting in an abundance of scrutiny among both parties (Christensen, Morsing & Thyssen, 2013). In order to understand CSR in relation to the gambling sector, the notion of Responsible Gaming (RG) is consolidated. This CSR component aims to minimize gambling-related problems among potentially vulnerable individuals (Griffiths & Derevensky, 2017). The Dutch government is currently pushing toward the regulation and liberalization of the online gambling market at the beginning of 2021 (Wet Kansspelen op afstand, n.d.). This awaited regulation leads to new gambling operations entering the market which affects the current operators and Responsible Gaming policies.

Subsequently, excellent CSR strategies are seen as a competitive advantage to distinguish a lottery product from other lottery providers which are becoming highly important (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Therefore, this research explores Responsible Gaming strategies with reference to the rapidly changing dynamics within the gambling sector.

1.1 Scientific and societal relevance

As expected, the topic of this research has been purposefully selected based on both scientific and social relevance. Firstly, this paper respects academic relevance since the importance of CSR within the organizational context increased over time. As thorough academic research on this soon expected expansion of the lottery sector is trivial, this research aims to contribute to the rampant field of responsible gaming theory in the lottery sector. To narrow down the scope of this research, a primary focus on the lottery sector is applied. Lotteries remain one of the most popular forms of gambling worldwide, as it allows the player to win a sizable cash prize for a relatively low investment (Griffiths & Derevensky, 2017). While it is perceived to be among the safer forms of gambling, players are nevertheless able to partake in excessive purchasing of lottery tickets. In addition, research has found that participating in lottery gambling may be an individual's gateway for continued gambling as well as problem gambling (Griffiths & Derevensky, 2017). Based on a theoretical exploration, it can be established that the impact of CSR and Responsible Gaming in the gambling industry is primarily addressed in relation to casino gambling (Lee, Song, Lee, Lee & Bernhard, 2013; Liu, Wong, Rongwei & Tseng, 2014; Wong & Gao, 2014), rather than the lottery sector. Thus, there is a paucity of the literature pertaining to the relationship between CSR and stakeholders within the lottery sector, limiting the understanding of how Responsible Gaming initiatives may influence the CSR strategies of the firm and ultimately the stakeholder perception toward the organization.

Secondly, this paper abides by societal relevance. The rising perception that gambling can harm individuals and negatively impact society has prompted strong socio-political forces aimed to restrict, moderate or reverse harmful gambling activity in the community (Blaszczynski, Ladouceur & Shaffer, 2004). Therefore, a robust framework on gambling applied to the Dutch lottery sector is of social and organizational relevance as this helps to map how RG is received, understood, and valued among various stakeholders. Moreover, at this moment, the liberalization of gambling is expected to take place in the near future, resulting in online and currently illegal gambling enterprises entering the market (Wet Kansspelen op afstand, n.d.). Consequently, the dynamics within the lottery sector will change which in turn affects current responsible gaming strategies. Thus, this research provides an exploratory base for understanding RG and its impact in a societal context.

Based on the apparent research gaps, the current research aims to explore the following research question: “How do CSR-based responsible gaming strategies impact the perspective of stakeholders in the Dutch lottery sector?”. Since the research is exploratory in nature, a qualitative method, explicitly conducting in-depth interviews, will be applied to generate a more in-depth analysis of the topic (Babbie, 2015). This method is chosen as it allows for a flexible yet thorough contribution to the currently narrow academic framework on corporate social responsibility, responsible gaming, and the related perception of various stakeholders (ex. employees, members of the gambling authority, retailers and players). To amount to this research objective, this research additionally aims to answer the following sub-questions:

Sub-RQ1: What constitutes CSR in the gambling sector?

Sub-RQ2: How is Responsible Gaming communicated internally within the gambling sector?

Sub-RQ3: How is Responsible Gaming addressed through external CSR strategies?

Sub-RQ4: How does CSR contribute to brand Reputation Management Strategies?

Sub-RQ5: How do stakeholders (e.g. employees, retailers, players) see the value of Responsible Gaming in the gambling sector?

Sub-RQ6: How does the liberalization of the gambling market impact the value of Responsible Gaming in the gambling sector?

1.2 Responsible Gaming in the gambling industry

Considering the aim to construct a strong theoretical framework surrounding Responsible Gaming, a brief background allows for a better grasp of the concept and its importance. This concept, being a facet of the CSR strategies within the gambling industry, refers to practices constructed to prevent potential harms resulting from gambling activities (Blaszczynski, Ladouceur & Shaffer, 2004). Moreover, the primary stakeholders in the gambling field are “consumers, gambling industry operators, health service and other welfare providers, interested community groups (i.e., including those in favor and opposed to legalized gambling), as well as governments and their related agencies that have the responsibility to protect the public.” (Blaszczynski, Ladouceur & Shaffer, 2004, p. 308). In the European Union (EU) alone, the estimated number of gambling addicts ranges anywhere between 2.5 and 10 million citizens (Jensen, 2017). More specifically for the Dutch society, in 2016, the Gaming Authority estimated the existence of approximately 20,300 problem gamblers and 92,000 at-risk gamblers within the Netherlands, which corresponds with patterns within other European countries (Littler & Jarvinen-Tassopoulos, 2018). Consequently, it can be established that effective RG strategies are desired to minimize (further) harm for this segment of Dutch society.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To explore the concept of Responsible Gaming, this section presents a theoretical framework for understanding and analyzing RG in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility, its internal and external stakeholders (e.g. retailers, the Gambling Authority, gambling addiction treatment centres, and players) and the related communication strategies of carrying out Responsible Gaming to said stakeholders. More specifically, this theoretical framework will shine light on the context of the Dutch gambling sector, with a specific focus on Dutch lotteries.

Firstly, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is assessed with the use of academic frameworks, addressing different components, and reviewing the historical evolution of the term. Secondly, to gain a deep understanding of stakeholder research and the connection to the gambling industry, the notion of valuable stakeholder theory is discussed. Thirdly, the next chapter discusses the diverse CSR communication strategies which organizations can adopt with the aim to effectively communicate their CSR initiatives to their stakeholders. Moreover, the fourth chapter addresses the literature on corporate reputation management strategies, as this can be considered a key dimension of CSR as a whole. Finally, the concept of Responsible Gaming is addressed thoroughly to fully understand the context of the current research objective in relation to the Dutch gambling market.

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

2.1.1 Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility

Firstly, the general notion and history of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the academic field is explored in order to establish a thorough grasp of CSR in relation to the gambling sector. In 1960, one of the earliest conceptualizations of CSR by Keith Davis suggested that social responsibility addresses “businesses’ decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm's direct economic or technical interest” (Carroll, 1991, p. 39). This initial appearance of a CSR definition stresses the importance of an organizational concern beyond financial performance, while additionally including the importance of social practices that surpass merely pursuing economic gains. Concurrently, Eells and Wallon (1961) approached CSR as the “problems that arise when corporate enterprise casts its shadow on the social scene and the ethical principles that ought to govern the relationship between the corporation and society” (p. 27). Ergo, scholars in the 1960s emphasized the apprehension that a business should contribute to society from both a financial perspective, while simultaneously abiding to the corporate legal obligations and pursuing a moral compass by contributing to society through voluntary activities (Ghobadian, Money, & Hillenbrand, 2015; Carroll, 1999).

In the following decade, a similar approach toward CSR was prevalent, with an emphasis on the notion of a socially responsible business and the need for differentiation among groups of internal stakeholders, taking account of for instance employees and suppliers, while also considering the external communities (Carroll, 1991). Within the 1970s, the academic framework in CSR practices has been enriched with a specific focus on theories arguing for organizational incorporation of socially oriented goals that go beyond financial gains. Nevertheless, research by Bani-Khalid and Ahmed (2017) found that this focus instigated an “expectation gap” (p. 208) with the organizational stakeholders, as there was an apparent need for community relations and conjunction between corporations and society. Thereupon, the notion of CSR as an advantage for organizations with the intent of merely generating maximum profits shifted to an emphasis on charitable actions for social and environmental welfare beyond financial gains.

With the continuum of the development of the CSR theory during the 1990s, several critiques surfaced addressing the ambiguity of the notion of CSR. Firstly, the importance of integration of stakeholders in CSR theories and models was attributed by Wood and Jones (1995), who voiced the need for a substantial “differentiation among the interests, expectations, experiences, and evaluations of stakeholders” (p. 176). In turn, light has been shed on the importance of stakeholder literature, which is arguably considered the dominant paradigm in contemporary organizational and societal theory (e.g., Andriof et al., 2002; Freeman, 2004; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Waddock, 2002). Besides, the ambiguity of the linguistic apprehension of the term ‘social’ has been receiving academic criticism throughout the 1990s. Accordingly, Clarkson (1995) suggests that terms such as corporate social responsibility, corporate social responsiveness, and corporate social performance owe its academic confusion due to the inclusive and vague meaning of the word social. In order to counter this issue, scholars initiated a deeper understanding of CSR by differentiating concepts such as sustainability (e.g., Benn, Edwards, & Williams, 2003; Goodland, 1995; Hart, 1999; Van Marrewijk, 2003), corporate citizenship (e.g., Carroll, 1998; McIntosh et al., 1998; Logsdon & Wood, 2002) and corporate reputation (e.g., Carroll & Sullivan, 1995; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Gray & Balmer, 1998). The introduction of these concepts broadened the understanding of CSR toward the beginning of the new century, by indicating that “social obligations are too narrow to facilitate an effective analysis of business responsibilities, and by incorporating stakeholders explicitly in the debate” (Freeman, 2004, p. 251).

On that note, general expectations of CSR have shifted remarkably over the previous decades, as philanthropic-based corporate volunteering has developed the realization that “social responsibility, sustainability, consumer protection, and product safety are central to investor confidence, constitute core business, and require a ‘whole of business approach’ driven from the top, by strong corporate

leadership” (Hancock, Schellinck & Schrans, 2008, p. 67). Following this train of thought, it is argued that when it comes to businesses, CSR is too often treated as a bolt-on to business operations whereas it should be incorporated in the purpose and strategy of the business (Grayson, 2006; Marques-Mendes & Santos, 2016). Accordingly, CSR is concerned with “the integration of environmental, social, economic and ethical considerations into business strategies and practices” (Jones, Hillier & Comport, 2009, p. 190). In addition, the concept entails efforts toward “minimizing negative environmental and social impacts and maximizing the positive impacts” (Grayson, 2006, p. 67). Respectively, these denotations imply that CSR is a construct that needs to be implemented into the business strategies and practices to gain control of the organizational impact on society and the environment.

Nevertheless, findings of Carroll (2015) and Werner and Chandler (2005) demonstrate that consistent definitions and vocabulary have yet to be constructed in the field of CSR, which is supported by the fact that an array of different comprehensions and definitions of CSR is apparent in the current academic groundwork. This scrutiny has prompted the contemporary quest for more delineated CSR research terminology which in turn allows for a better understanding and application of CSR in academia and in practice. Following this, Dahlsrud (2008) argued that the most widely used definition of CSR is proposed by the Commission of the European Communities, who define CSR as “A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (Dahlsrud, 2008, p. 7). On a critical note, it is appealed that this definition does not explicitly affirm the importance of ethical components in the CSR debate. In Dahlsrud’s (2008) study, the ethical aspect was subsumed in another component, whereas it, in fact, plays a primary part in an abundance of leading CSR thinkers. For instance, ethics are a primary feature in Carroll’s (1979) CSR pyramid, which will be discussed in the following section. Hence, in order to provide this research with a theoretical thread, further mention of CSR will abide by the definition of Sarkar & Searcy (2016), who state that “CSR implies that firms must foremost assume their core economic responsibility and voluntarily go beyond legal minimums so that they are ethical in all of their activities and that they take into account the impact of their actions on stakeholders in society, while simultaneously contributing to global sustainability” (p. 1433).

2.1.2 How CSR is constructed

A primary model toward comprehending CSR is the pyramid of corporate social responsibility (see figure 1), which presents four hierarchical components related to organizational (social) responsibilities (Carroll, 1991).

This model provides a theoretical framework for assessing organizational social responsibility efforts. The following section examines these individual components in more detail in order to assess CSR in a specific gambling context.

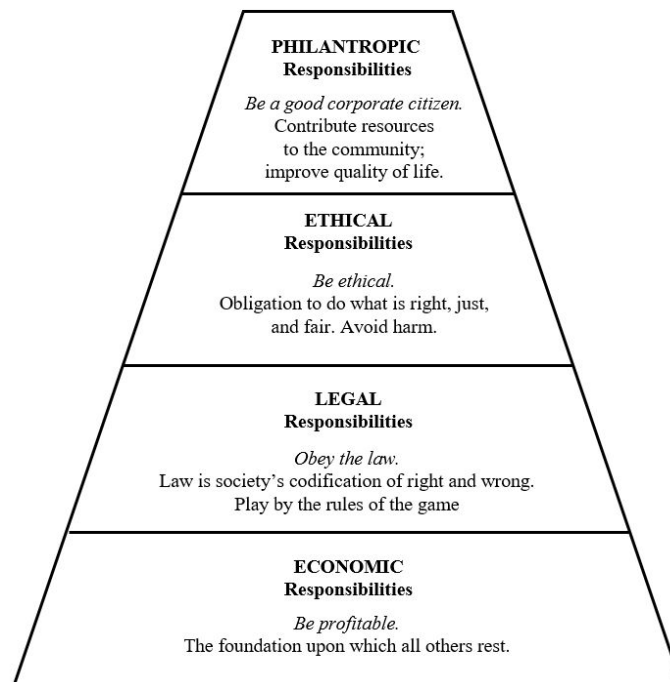


Figure 1. The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll, 1991)

Firstly, this conceptual model refers to the economic responsibilities as the fundamental component of the pyramid, referring to the primary incentive for entrepreneurship: maximizing profits. According to Carroll (1991), the economic component serves as an organizational foundation as all other corporate responsibilities “are predicated upon the economic responsibility of the firm, because without it the others become moot considerations” (p. 50). Secondly, beyond sanctioning businesses to generate profit, society expects businesses to comply with the law and regulations enabled by the state and the local governments. The second hierarchical component of the pyramid refers to the societal expectation that firms pursue their economic objectives based on the ‘social contract’ between business and society (Carroll, 1991). These legal responsibilities reflect “a view of “codified ethics” in the sense that they embody basic notions of fair operations as established by our lawmakers” (p. 51). Succeeding this, the third block addresses the ethical organizational operations which go beyond the required law, emphasizing the congruence between the business practices and the values embedded in its stakeholder body and society as a whole (Carroll, 1991). Lastly, Carroll refers to the fourth component of the pyramid being the philanthropic obligations of a firm, which highlights the corporate responsibility to employ humanitarian activities (1991). In turn, a business is obliged to act as a good ‘corporate citizen’ by giving back to the community.

Per contra, more recent research critiques the hierarchical order of Carroll's CSR pyramid. Research by Baden (2016) argues that, in fact, ethical responsibilities are a fundamental component of the pyramid as businesses need to "first and foremost accept its ethical responsibility to do no harm and conform to society's ethical norms and expectations" (p. 11). As a consequence, businesses are able to obtain a license to operate and to establish trust with the production of valuable natural and human resources. Moreover, businesses need to comply with legal responsibilities as these grant the opportunity to make a profit and pursue corporate objectives (Baden, 2016). Accordingly, legal responsibilities are positioned as the second component within the CSR pyramid. Thus, Carroll's pyramid is altered to fit the following hierarchical order: ethical responsibilities, legal responsibilities, economic responsibilities and finally philanthropic responsibilities. Relating this to the current research, all elements play a substantial role in CSR in relation to the gambling sector, which will be further addressed in the following sections.

2.2 Stakeholder theory

A now classic definition of stakeholders, introduced by Freeman (1984), proposed that stakeholders are "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of a corporation's purpose" (as cited by Kolk and Pinske, 2006, p. 60). From a critical standpoint, this remains a broad definition as the field of possible stakeholders is seen to be unambiguously open to every individual (Maio, 2003). Hence, a differentiation between 'primary' and 'secondary' stakeholders is established (Benn, O'Leary & Abratt, 2016; Clarkson, 1995). Regarding a primary or participant stakeholder, one's participation is crucial for the survival of the corporation, whereas secondary or non-participant stakeholders influence and affect the corporation and vice versa, yet are not essential for its corporate survival (Metcalf, 1998; Yang & Basile, 2019). Moreover, Driscoll and Starik (2004) state that an increase in stakeholder proximity is directly related to a greater likelihood of the establishments of stakeholder relationships. However, the notion of proximity can be considered ambiguous, as Miles (2017) notes that proximity extends beyond the physical closeness of stakeholders, as it also regards shared ideas, associations and values.

One of the dominant theories that have been utilized to analyze and understand CSR is the notion of Stakeholder theory (Jones, Hillier & Comport, 2009; Miles, 2017). This theory suggests that organizations yearn to understand the needs and aspirations of all of their stakeholders, including governments, employees, investors, communities, customers or suppliers. In recent years, the main emphasis shifted from immediate profit to creating long-term value and mutual friendships between stakeholders (Rahman et al., 2002; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). In turn, it is established that these needs should be apparent within corporate strategies (Lim & Greenwood, 2017; Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008). On a critical note, several business model frameworks appear to be established upon

the assumption that “while some stakeholders contribute to value creation processes (e.g., suppliers), other stakeholders benefit from the value created (e.g., customers)” (Freudenreich, Lüdeke-Freund & Schaltegger, 2019, p. 5). Hence, this notion ignores the probability of reciprocal value exchange in which a sole stakeholder concurrently contributes and receives something of value.

In addition, a balance should be instituted between the claims of shareholders - one of the main claimants on the firm - and other stakeholders (Ruf et al., 2001; Heath and Norman, 2004). By tying this to the current research on CSR, it is valuable to address that pressure from primary stakeholders exerts a substantial impact on CSR implementation (Helmig, Spraul & Ingenhoff, 2016). It is argued that employees are the stakeholders with the greatest influence on the ‘positive pressure’ on an effective CSR implementation, as they carefully observe firm activities. Hence, a firm’s socially responsible behavior could generate competitive advantages in relation to the internal role of employees (e.g., positive word of mouth, employee loyalty, and retention).

Moreover, according to Deegan (2014) stakeholder theories can be subdivided into two branches; the ethical branch and the managerial branch. The ethical branch revolves around prescriptions on how organizations are expected to interact with and treat, their stakeholders (Loh, Deegan & Inglis, 2015). Vice versa, the managerial branch generates a positive nature and aims to explain managerial behavior; for example why they choose to disclose certain information (Deegan, 2014). Following the trajectory of the managerial branch of stakeholder theory, it is argued that the importance of a stakeholder depends on “the influence or control they possess over ‘resources’ required by the organisation” (Loh, Deegan & Inglis, 2015, p. 795). Thus, based on the perceived power of a stakeholder in terms of controlling organisational resources, a judgement is made of the obligation to meet their expectations and demands. For the current research, it is valuable to explore this notion of stakeholder power in relation to the Dutch gambling market. In addition, Grey et al. (1996) argue that information is viewed as a major tool to manage - or even manipulate - the stakeholder perception with the purpose of “gaining their support and approval or to distract their opposition and disapproval” (Loh, Deegan & Inglis, 2015, p. 796). All in all, the conceptualization of stakeholder theory allows for a deeper grasp of how corporations can manage their powerful stakeholders strategically and establish a balance between contradictory demands of stakeholder groups (Chen and Roberts, 2010).

2.3 CSR communication strategies

While it is generally agreed that businesses need to manage their relationships with stakeholders, approaches toward achieving this vary considerably (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Proceeding from the characterization of models of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), Morsing & Schultz (2006)

propose three CSR communication strategies based on how companies strategically engage in CSR in respect to their stakeholders. The first strategy, the stakeholder information strategy, perceives communication as a one-directional flow of information from the companies to its stakeholders (Duthler & Dhanesh, 2018; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). It is assumed that stakeholders can appeal to their influence by giving support through their purchasing habits, showing loyalty and demonstrating their opposition in terms of boycotting the company (Smith, 2003). Hence, to ensure stakeholder support rather than opposition, companies must inform stakeholders about their good intentions. However, this strategy considers external stakeholders to be out of scope (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Secondly, the stakeholder response strategy sprouts from a two-way asymmetric communication model, which refers to a communication flow to and from the public (Duthler & Dhanesh, 2018). However, it is assumed that an imbalance from the effects of public relations with a favor for companies is apparent, as public relations does not spark change within the company. Rather, companies aspire to change public perceptions and behavior. Thus, this stakeholder involvement strategy generates the need for organizational negotiation and drawing information from its stakeholders, which establishes an ongoing and systematic interaction with various stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). As a consequence, these interactions allow the stakeholders to share their expectations, which ultimately requests and permits change within the company.

Lastly, the third strategy presented by Morsing & Schultz (2006) is stakeholder involvement strategy, which is in line with the stakeholder response strategy that stakeholder expectations should be investigated and addressed. However, the final strategy delves deeper by assuming that informing and surveying the stakeholders is not sufficient, as there needs to be a systematic dialogue with stakeholders as a basis for the development of CSR initiatives.

2.4 Corporate reputation management (CRM)

While CSR in relation to stakeholders has been discussed, CSR has been identified as a key dimension of corporate reputation (Schnietz & Epstein, 2005). The corporate reputation can be described as a socially shared set of beliefs about a company's ability and willingness to abide by the interests of its stakeholders (Fombrun, 1996). However, another definition approaches a corporate reputation as the "observers' collective judgments of a corporation based on assessments of the financial, social, and environmental impacts attributed to the corporation over time" (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2006, p. 34). Consequently, this takes on a different approach with a focus on the accumulated impacts of an organization, rather than the stakeholder interests. In addition, the latter authors emphasize that the term reputation involves estimation, which implies judgment or assessment. Consequently, a corporate reputation has a potential for value-creating, as well as a

competitive advantage as the intangible sense of a reputation makes the desire of replicating these strategies considerably difficult for competing firms (Dowling, 2016; Roberts & Dowling, 2002).

Moreover, in terms of corporate reputation strategies, two specific relationships that should not be neglected are the ones with customers and employees (Melo & Garrido-Morgado, 2012). Moreover, it is established that both customers and employees are attracted to high-reputation firms (Roberts & Dowling, 2002; Heikkurinen, 2010), which is in turn beneficial for creating a lucrative customer and employee base. In addition, Melo & Garrido-Morgado (2012) propose that CSR engagement is the most effective among all managerial practices for building a sustainable competitive advantage and a strong corporate reputation. Relating this to the lottery field, a corporate reputation needs to be precisely managed, as this 'sin sector' is often associated with harm and negativity (Yang, Ren & Lau, 2020). In addition, the gambling industry has a tainted reputation which originates from the money laundering procedures in the early 20th century (Shelat & Egger, 2002). Besides, unlike sports betting which reflects an unambiguous outcome, casino games and lotteries are presumed to solely be ruled by chance. In turn, full trust in the gambling corporation and the fairness of its odds is required (Shelat & Egger, 2002). Thus, it is especially crucial to establish a substantial CSR strategy as this leads to a good reputation.

2.5 Responsible Gaming in the gambling sector

In the field of gambling research, a need for clear principle guidelines is voiced, as without such guidelines the research agenda will persist to be distorted, which will never allow for integrity and ways to address issues at a policy level (Livingstone & Adams, 2015). Following this train of thought, the concept of Responsible Gaming requires to be taken under the loop as there lacks clarity around this amorphous definition (Hancock & Smith, 2017). On a quest for shaping RG policy and global consensus, academic roundtables with governmental support and commercial gambling interests lead to the construction of the Reno Model (Blaszczynski et al., 2004).

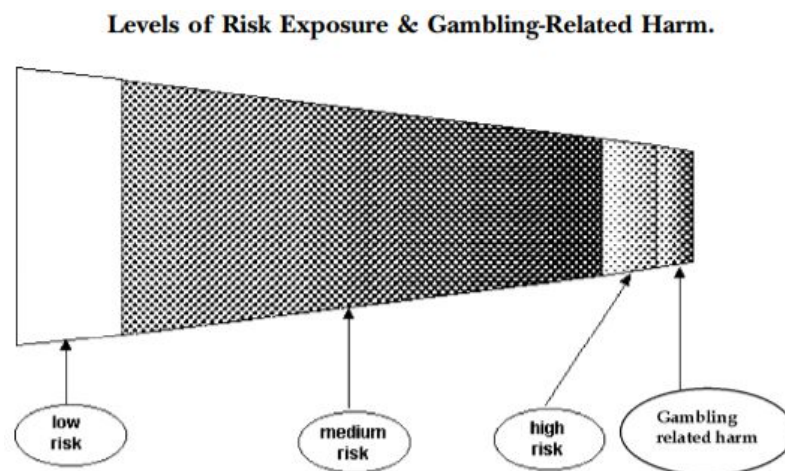


Figure 2. The Reno model by Blaszczynski et al., 2004

This model (see figure 2) differentiates different levels of risk exposure among gambling consumers. With this model, gambling corporations can target their responsible gaming strategies to high-risk individuals within the consumer base. Following this, said strategies should primarily target “gamblers in the high-risk cell, with the aim of preventing migration to the gambling-related harm cell” (Blaszczynski et al., 2004, p. 310). The purpose of this model was to create a basis to establish a “global consensus on RG standards, definitions, and measuring instruments, leading to a cooperative research agenda that could ultimately help lower problem gambling incidence and prevalence rates” (Hancock & Smith, 2017, p. 1155). This first model has been positively received by governments, regulators, and gambling organizations, as the model did not require high levels of accountability from them. While the model is seen as a stepping stone for a RG framework, it has been critiqued for its narrow scope, insufficient concern for consumer safety, and not being strict enough on what is expected from governments and gambling companies (Schellinck & Schrans, 2004). Moreover, it is critiqued that the individual is obliged to be responsible while neglecting harm-inducing gambling policies, formats, and environments (Livingstone et al., 2010).

Typically, the implementation of responsible gaming strategies can take various forms. Research by Ladouceur, Shaffer, Blaszczynski & Shaffer (2017) proposes five primary RG strategies, with the first one being self-exclusion. This practice refers to self-exclusion programs that offer gamblers the opportunity to voluntarily restrict themselves from gambling activity. Whether this self-exclusion is effective can be assessed based on the measured gambling abstinence, or at the least, a reduction in gambling activity after the program enrollment. Research by Dragicevic, Percy, Kudic & Parke (2015) presents a process evaluation of the behavior of online self excluders, but were unable to determine the effectiveness of the self-exclusion programs. Nevertheless, the researchers found statistically significant discrepancies among the behavior of online gambling players who participated in the self-exclusion programs, in comparison to other players (Dragicevic et al., 2015). As a next step, future research could investigate these differences in relation to predicting gambling behavior and self-exclusion. The second strategy proposed by Ladouceur et al. (2017) is tracking gambling behavior to develop algorithms that are able to identify sentinel events. For instance, scholars focus on the patterns in early characteristics of online gambling behavior which developed potential gambling problems (Gray, LaPlante & Shaffer, 2012; Gray, Matthew, LaPlante & Shaffer, 2015). In addition, responsible gaming departments can aim to identify multi-game behavioral markers that allow for identification of early high-risk problem gambling (Braverman, LaPlante, Nelson & Shaffer, 2013). The third strategy is setting gambling limits (Dragicevic et al., 2015). For instance, it is found that setting voluntary limits significantly affected the monetary spending behavior for both casino and lottery gaming players, and voluntary limit setting was found to be more effective in comparison to time limits when it comes to reducing gambling behavior (Auer & Griffiths, 2013). The fourth strategy towards responsible gaming proposed by Dragicevic et al. (2015) is RG game features. For instance, it is found that the inclusion of warning messages appearing in the centre of player screens were recalled more frequently, accompanied by a greater impact and usefulness compared to messages on the periphery of player screens (Gainsbury, Russell, Hing, Wood, Lubman, & Blaszczynski, 2013). Finally, training of employees concerning problem gambling intervention is seen as a strategy toward responsible gambling (Dragicevic et al., 2015). Research by Hing & Nuske (2012) proposes that responding to problem gamblers in a casino venue is accompanied by role conflict, role ambiguity, and challenges for the hospitality staff. Hence, this strategy is seen as a complex approach, as staff experience difficulties regarding to privacy issues, internal dilemma's and uncertainty of the player's gambling problem. However, scholars explore the implemented training of casino venue employees, yet research on (online) lottery gambling interventions remains scarce.

Over the past decade, RG has been reshaped to abide by the previous critiques. A more recent definition of RG acknowledges that both the individual and the wider community should be embraced, stating that gambling providers must take care of patrons and employees, while

simultaneously respecting the public safety and social responsibilities (Hancock, 2011; Hancock & Smith, 2017). Hence, RG should not be utilized as a revenue generator but a pre-eminent principle for customer protection. In addition, transparency and public reporting are corporate obligations. Thus, the concept of RG has been shaped based on the developments within the policy landscape and can be established to be more inclusive yet amorphous due to its multidimensional character.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Design

This research aimed to contribute to a better understanding of Responsible Gaming in the context of the Dutch gambling sector. Through an interpretive approach, the current research explored how stakeholders in the Dutch lottery sector value and regard the concept of Responsible Gaming in relation to CSR. To conduct this research, a set of stakeholders operating in different spectrums within the sector was selected to gather a variety of perspectives and insights on the topic of Responsible Gaming (see Table 3.1). Based on the stakeholders discussed in the theoretical framework, the company *Nederlandse Loterij* was selected as a central case within this research, as this Dutch lottery firm is a state operation and executor of the Dutch gambling policy. In turn, this focal firm attaches great importance to consumer protection. The data has been collected through qualitative in-depth interviews, which formed a thorough foundation for answering the research question and its sub-questions. Specifically, the interviews were semi-structured and estimated to last an average of 51 minutes per interview. Internal stakeholders' different perspectives were addressed by conducting interviews with Responsible Gaming experts within the lottery firm, as well as employees within different operations departments and brands of *Nederlandse Loterij*. In addition, insights from external stakeholders were collected through interviews with people within the general gambling sector, such as individuals from gambling addiction institutes, retailers of gambling products, and gambling players. This selection of interviewees allowed for a thorough understanding of the stakeholders' values and the related expertise regarding Responsible Gaming, as well as the composition of a comprehensive mixture of perspectives.

As the current academic area of expertise mostly revolves around policy and market developments related to Responsible Gaming, there is a current lack of sufficient theoretical research on the different stakeholder perspectives regarding these developments. Hence, the exploratory nature of this research on the perceptions and perspectives of stakeholders was addressed through qualitative research methods, as this qualitative approach can provide new and elaborate insights (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020; Babbie, 2015). Simultaneously, in-depth interviews allow researchers to better understand and give meaning to the participants' feelings and opinions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Moreover, the objective of this research method was to evoke open-ended responses, which in turn allowed for determining what elements influence an individual to act a certain way or to shape an opinion. Moreover, semi-structured interviews allowed for flexible adaptations to the respondents, which is a dynamic that allowed for potentially unexpected insights into the research topic (Babbie, 2015). Consequently, this structure granted the researcher with the opportunity to delve deeper into discussions regarding social matters (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Through the use of an interview guide

(see Appendix A), the interviewer was able to establish a sense of guidance throughout the interview, while preserving flexibility and room for participants to bring up new valuable insights regarding the topic of RG (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Adopting this research method in this study allowed the researcher to create a comprehensive understanding of the Dutch lottery sector, the corporate communication strategies regarding RG, and the meaning of CSR in general and RG in particular among stakeholders.

3.2 Operationalization

As previously touched upon, qualitative interviews have been the chosen method of data gathering for this research as it offers flexibility in the process and generates a more in-depth analysis of the topic (Babbie, 2015). Consequently, this research contributes to enhancing the framework on corporate social responsibility, responsible gaming, and the related perception of the stakeholders. The semi-structured interviews provided the interviewees with room to apply their expertise and knowledge to the dialogue (Edwards & Holland, 2013). An interview guide was prepared to ensure the explicit coverage of all essential topics. However, these open-ended questions were constructed as a guide while expecting new themes to arise from the discussion (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Table 1 presents an overview of the thought process behind the construction of the interview guide, as all questions asked can be traced back to the sub-questions of the current research. This way, the scope of the research is obeyed throughout the data collection procedure. In addition, probes and follow-up techniques were adopted to generate a thorough understanding of the concepts and topics discussed. The interviews yielded diverse results due to the open nature of the dialogue as well as the various backgrounds and perspectives of the stakeholders. Each dialogue has been opened with the oral consent of the interviewee as well as a statement of their right to discontinue the conversation at any time. All interviews were conducted through Skype, which allowed for a digital face-to-face conversation. During the interview, the researcher used a recording device to collect the data, while simultaneously keeping notes during the interview to collect a consistent depiction of the situation and the correctness of the transcriptions (Mikecz, 2012).

Research sub-question	Sub-topic	Example questions
1. What constitutes CSR in the gambling sector?	Understanding of CSR	* When it comes to Corporate Social Responsibility, can you explain to me what this concept means to you?
	CSR importance	* Has the impact and importance of this term changed over the last years?
	CSR communication	* How does the company aim to establish a good Corporate Social Responsibility image?
2. How is RG communicated internally within the gambling sector?	Internal communication	* Does the company communicate CSR strategies internally? * Can you give an example?
	Internal collaboration	* How do employees see the value of Responsible Gaming in the lottery sector?
	Possible challenges	* Do you think all employees are equally aware of the RG strategies?
3. How is Responsible Gaming addressed through external CSR strategies?	External communication	* How does the company communicate CSR to the outside world?
	Possible challenges	* Do you think the external CSR communication of this corporate is sufficient?
4. How does CSR contribute to corporate Reputation Management Strategies?	Current reputation	* How does RG relate to the current reputation of the firm?
	RM strategies	* How does CSR relate to brand reputation strategies of the firm?
5. How do stakeholders (eg. employees, retailers, players) see the value of Responsible Gaming in the gambling sector?	Stakeholder perspective	* How do stakeholders (e.g. employees, the gambling authority, the government) see the value of Responsible Gaming in the lottery sector?
	Stakeholder communication	* In what way do stakeholders engage with the information they receive?
6. How does the liberalization of the gambling market impact the value of Responsible Gaming in the gambling sector?	Anticipated changes	* What influence will the liberalization of the gambling market have on responsible gaming?
	Stakeholder valuation	* How do stakeholders see the value of Responsible Gaming in relation to the open market?

Table 1. Operationalization of interview structure

3.3 Sampling and Data Gathering Process

For this research, thirteen interviews were conducted (N=13), with different experts and employees within lottery organizations as well as stakeholders within the lottery sector. With this quantity of interviews, the level of theoretical saturation was reached, which nullified the necessity of additional interviews and additional insights (Coyne, 1997; van Rijnsoever, 2017). As the sample of this research was rather small in size (N=13), a comprehensive and exhaustive sample of expert perspectives within the lottery sector was prioritized. The data was collected between 19 March and 24 April 2020. Figure 3 visualizes the stakeholder body which the individuals are yielded from (see figure 3). These individuals were selected based on their qualifications to lend their professional opinion towards understanding and making meaning of Responsible Gaming. This makes sense, as prior relations were established with the individuals within the company, and the company has agreed to support this research. In addition to the internal stakeholder perspective, several interviews with external stakeholders were conducted to gain a comprehensive stakeholder representation.

Since the interviewees were selected on relevant predetermined criteria, a purposive sampling method was applied (Patton, 1990). Based on a criterion sampling method, a method of nonprobability sampling, these relevant criteria were a basis for choosing participants of specific research (Babbie, 2015). In turn, the research was competent to yield as much useful and valuable data as possible. For the purpose of this research, primary stakeholders were selected of which participation is seen to be crucial for the survival of the firm (Metcalf, 1998; Yang & Basile, 2019). As shown in figure 3, the current research predominantly focused on internal stakeholders, assessing the perspectives of board members and Product Owners, in addition to those of various departments within the case company (i.e. Corporate Social Responsibility, Marketing, Retail, Organizational Affairs). In addition, external stakeholders with a direct connection to the Responsible Gaming policies were selected (i.e. Retailers, treatment centres for gambling addiction, and consumers). This choice was made as these stakeholders are directly affected by the Responsible Gaming policy and, in turn, highly involved with Responsible Gaming strategy optimization. As a consequence, a well-considered and diverse pool of interviewees was established, which allowed for an appropriate sample diversity (See figure 3).

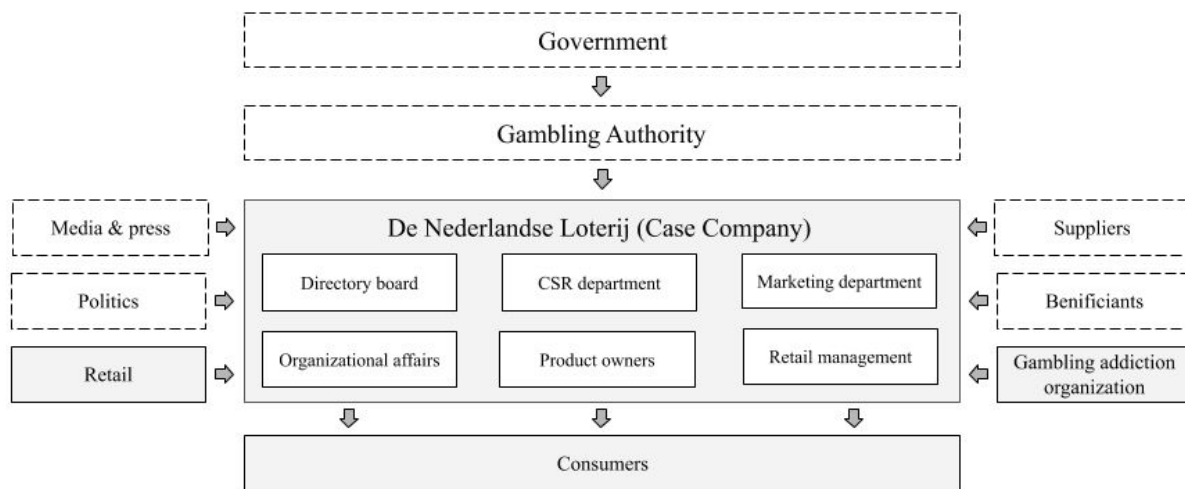


Figure 3. Visualization of data sources (highlighted in grey)

In order to conduct the interviews, all interviewees were contacted personally or via email in order to request an estimated one-hour digital interview. This request informed the participants with the scope and the aim of the research. If interviewees were willing to cooperate, a form was sent prior to the interview to establish the participants' written consent. At the start of the interview, the ensured privacy and the option to remain anonymous has been discussed in order to make the participants feel at ease and informed prior to the interview. All interviews were conducted digitally through Skype, which increased the level of comfort of both the interviewer and the interviewee in question. A digital setting was chosen as it allows for a safe and comfortable environment while also contributing to a participant's compliance toward a comprehensive and genuine conversation (Babbie, 2015). The interviews were conducted in the mother tongue of all participants, being the Dutch language, as this allowed the participants to feel comfortable and to share their thoughts as precisely and thoroughly as possible.

Moreover, upon request the exact functions of the employees were not specified in order to refrain from privacy issues. Therefore, no specific references to the job descriptions are made in order to insure confidentiality among employees within the focal organization. In order to contextualize, it can be disclosed that the internal interviewees fulfill functions within the CSR department, the organizational board, the Marketing department, the Field Sales department, the Sponsor and Beneficiaries department in the focal company. Regardless, a well-considered and diverse pool of interviewees was established, resulting in an appropriate sample diversity which generated valuable data.

3.4 Analysis and Coding Process

After the process of data gathering, the researcher commenced with the process of preparing and organizing the data for analysis. The interviews have been transcribed manually directly after each interview, as this provided the researcher with a better understanding of the data and familiarity with the data set. A transcription verbatim method was applied, meaning no alterations were applied in relation to pauses, grammar, or use of language (McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig, 2003).

Following this, a thematic analysis was chosen as it involves detecting themes and patterns of behavior and living (Aronson, 1995; Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). Based on the similarities and differences of the data set, this method allowed for a flexible and detailed data analysis process (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Considering that individuals are seen to seek an understanding of the world surrounding them, a social constructivist approach was applied (Creswell, 2009). As qualitative research is mostly inductive with meaning yielded from the data, a theory was inductively developed rather than established prior to the analysis. As the subjective meaning-making process of individuals' experiences was centralized in this approach, the researcher's reflexivity was required. Admittedly, the researcher's subjectivity is assumed; however, active efforts to maintain an open mind and avoid making value judgments were expected (Croker, 2009).

With the use of a coding process, the researcher is granted with the possibility to discover themes or theories within the data (Croker, 2009). In addition, coding the data helps establish priorities and provide focus throughout the process of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2009). More specifically, this process entails labeling small chunks of data, such as a line in an interview excerpt (See figure 4). A grand scheme of non-inclusive open codes has been extracted from the transcripts, which were selected based on potential importance toward the research question. Through the initial coding process, a total of 815 quotations have been brought forth in the data set, which was then funneled into a total of 321 open codes. Subsequently, these open codes were clustered and cross-coded into first-order observations, which generated the emergence of themes and connections between codes (Creswell, 2009). The next step was to critically assess these initial codes into second-order themes, axial codes, which imply a complex connection (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, these themes were channeled into six final aggregate dimensions, which were the bases for interpretations, results, and discussions in relation to the research objective. The qualitative data analysis tool Atlas.ti has been utilized to establish a consistent and reliable data gathering process.

sportweddenschappen en daar hebben we het nog niet over gehad. We willen natuurlijk ook kanalisatie sportweddenschappen en daar worden we qua vergunningen ook heel erg achtergesteld qua illegale aanbieders. En als we dan hebben over een balans, dan maakt het eigenlijk niet zo uit hoeveel reclame maken want we hebben gewoon niet het aantrekkelijkste aanbod. Dus mensen gaan naar het illegale alternatief. Dus aan de ene kant is die balans een goed product kunnen bieden zodat de klant denkt ik heb geen verdere speel behoefte, En hun daarin in voldoende mate op attenderen. Dus die diversiteit in dat productaanbod is ook een belangrijk aspect van die balans.

A: Ja maar als ik het zo hoor zou het ook kunnen dat het een te aantrekkelijke aanbod wordt waardoor mensen teveel gaan spelen?

K: Ja daarom moet je ook altijd letten op die balans. Dat is denk ik ook waarom vanuit oudsher vanuit de overheid is besloten om een monopolie vrij te geven. Zodat je per definitie de mogelijkheden beperkt. En binnen de vergunning hebben we bijvoorbeeld een aantal trekkingen waar we aan moeten voldoen, we mogen ook niet meer trekkingen doen. En op het moment dat je de macht open gooit dan heb je meer trekkingen, meer reclame. En als je kijkt naar het kansspelbeleid dan is het aantal trekkingen beperken de eerste veiligheidsklep op het voorkomen van overmatige deelname. En verder blijkt ook uit onderzoek dat loterijen eigenlijk heel erg beperkt verslavingsgevoelig zijn. En dat is natuurlijk heel anders bij casino games en sportweddenschappen omdat je eigenlijk een instant Return hebt van je inleg. Dus het feit dat je bij Staatsloterij 30 dagen moet wachten voor de uitslag heeft ook een zekere matigende werking.



Figure 4. Visualization of open coding process using Atlas.ti

3.5 Reliability and Validity

In order to ensure a valuable addition to the body of academic theory on RG in the Dutch lottery sector, the current research aimed to establish the validity and reliability of the data (Burnard et al., 2008; Patton, 2001). Throughout the whole qualitative research process, these two notions required high consideration in order to establish the trustworthiness of research findings (Golafshani, 2003). Reliability refers to the understanding that the research results shall be replicative (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009; Golafshani, 2003). This was ensured through an extensive purposeful sampling process, which preserves a level of expert knowledge on the topic of Responsible Gaming in the lottery sector (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Smulowitz, 2017). Moreover, throughout the whole data analysis, the tool Atlas.ti has been utilized to minimize flaws and errors within the data results. In addition, an interview guide was constructed (see Appendix A) in order to abide by the replicability of the research.

The second aspect of trustworthy research, validity, entails the accurateness of the research and its measurements (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009). In other words, validity addresses whether the research measures what it is supposed to measure. This notion was respected in the current research by abiding by source triangulation, which entails gathering information through different sets of data sources. More specifically, the current research aimed to conduct interviews with several sets of stakeholders within the field of gambling in relation to CSR, which accounted for a sound research

design. However, due to situational limitations, the source triangulation could not be fully established as for some stakeholder sets only one individual agreed on taking part in this research. This limitation was countered by assessing the stakeholder perspective through the lens of internal stakeholders, who shared the external stakeholder perspectives they encountered through their close relationships with said stakeholder. In addition, research validity was pursued by gathering a detailed record of the interviews, including interpretations of visual and vocal behavior expressed by the interviewees. This way, the research accounted for a transparent research design (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

4. RESULTS

Following the coding process, several core concepts emerged from the data which form the subject of analysis in the current chapter. Through this analysis, fundamental themes and patterns became apparent within the conceptualizations and perceptions provided by the interviewees. Guided by these themes, all sub-questions of the research objectives were assessed and discussed in relation to the stakeholder perspectives. Firstly, the stakeholders' notion of CSR is examined in order to assess the current CSR communication strategies. Secondly, the internal responsible gaming operations are addressed, with a focus on internal dynamics and a corporate perspective toward responsible gaming. Thirdly, responsible gaming is examined with a focus on external responsible gaming communication strategies. In the fourth section, light is shed on the reputation management strategies in relation to responsible gaming. In the fifth section, the stakeholder management strategies and its effectiveness are critically examined. Finally, the sixth section of this chapter addresses an important theme with high prominence: namely the anticipated opening of the Dutch online gambling market and its relation to the concept of responsible gaming.

Moreover, in order to present a comprehensive study, this chapter aims to connect the dots between existing literature on the subject matter and the contemporary findings. Consequently, a thorough exploration of the concepts and patterns derived from the data allows for a deeper understanding of responsible gaming in both the practical and the academic spheres.

4.1 Corporate social responsibility strategies

This section explores the dominant theme of corporate social responsibility strategies, which has been thoroughly discussed by the interviewees. Based on an analysis of the stakeholders' understanding of CSR, the contemporary CSR communication strategies, and the CSR initiatives, the following sub-question is examined: 'What constitutes CSR in the lottery sector?'. In figure 5, an overview of the results of theme 1 is provided.

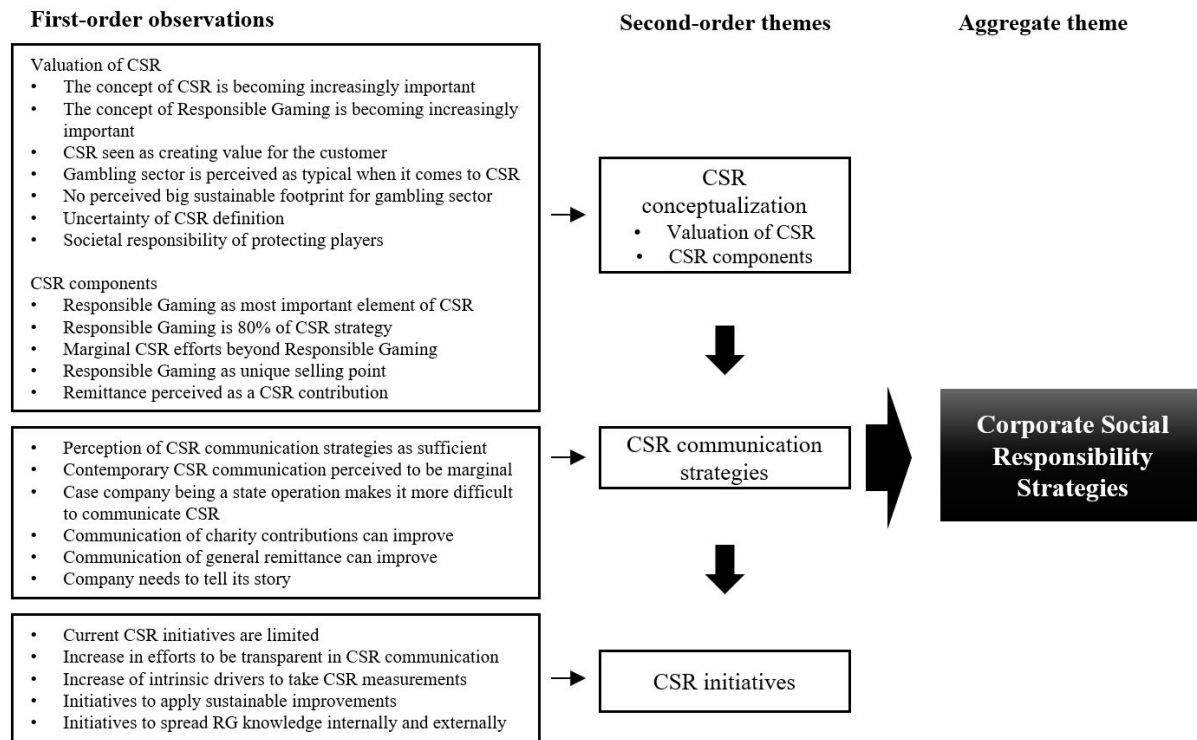


Figure 5. Visualization of qualitative results of theme 1

4.1.1 Understanding of CSR

In order to get a grasp of the interviewees' understanding of CSR, all interviewees were asked to set forth a personal understanding of CSR. Firstly, a clear finding is that multiple stakeholders addressed the notion of an 'impact on society', which is a thorough thread throughout the data set. For instance, interviewee D expresses this in such a manner:

"In general for CSR I think we should look at the impact of our products on the world, on the Netherlands. On our position in society." (Interviewee D)

Following this, other interviewees approached CSR by emphasizing the various aspects that come into play when considering this responsibility revolving a corporate impact. For example, interviewee A explains:

“Well, I see Corporate Social Responsibility as being accountable as an organization for everything you do. What is your impact on the world around you? And how do you account for that? That has a lot of aspects. That is “how do you treat your employees?” and “do you separate your waste?”, “how is the structure of your personnel?” to “where do you buy your products?”. So that has many sides”. (Interviewee A)

Consequently, corresponding with what has been exhibited in the theoretical framework of the current research, a thorough, coherent definition of CSR is yet to be established. Looking beyond these diversified facets of CSR, which might make it difficult to assess CSR as an outlined territory, it can be noted that the interviewees do address the notion of social accountability. Accordingly, interviewees emphasize the accountability and “responsibility in relation to a corporate role in society” (Interviewee C), which ties to a company’s contribution to society. For example, a gambling consumer indicates:

“For me, that means a company's contribution to society, actually giving something back to society in any area. Whether that's environment or charities or whatever” (Interviewee L)

Therefore, the interviewees believe that CSR entails a contribution to society, yet it is not tied to a set format or specific form of realizing this contribution. However, even though the execution of this contribution is free for interpretation, interviewees state that CSR initiatives should excel the objective of making a profit. For instance, a gambling consumer states:

“Yes, so that it is not just about making money and making a profit, but that the company is really doing their best to earn a place in society, so to say.” (Interviewee M)

Following this train of thought, several interviewees address CSR as the responsibilities which contribute to earning a place in society, which stresses the notion of a business as an entity that should operate from within society, rather than solely focusing on the business operations, while simultaneously disregarding its impact on society. Corresponding with this statement, other interviewees emphasize the contribution to society more concretely, namely by creating value to the stakeholder, and specifically the customer. For example, interviewee F states:

“What I understand most about it [CSR] is long-term value creation for your stakeholder and the most important stakeholders, the customer. It [CSR] never existed before and it was all about creating value for your shareholder. [...] And now this is at least as important and there is really much focus on corporate social responsibility.” (Interviewee F)

According to this perception of CSR, the responsibility of an organization revolves around long-term value orientation for the stakeholder, with a specific focus on the customer. This perception is a

different approach toward the concept of CSR, as it highlights the importance of a specific stakeholder cohort, rather than that of society as a whole. Moreover, a change in the notion of CSR becomes apparent, as the importance of a focus on stakeholders is apparent rather than solely maintaining a focus on shareholders. This ties to the previous mention of a perception that goes beyond financial gain, as stakeholders have become as important if not more important than shareholders. This shift is in line with the academic view of CSR, as it is emphasized that the notion of a socially responsible business and the need for differentiation among groups of internal stakeholders are becoming increasingly important. This is done by taking account of for instance employees and suppliers, while also considering the external communities (Carroll, 1991; Miles, 2017). In addition, the perception of stakeholder value creation corresponds with that of an employee who defines CSR as to how a company plays “its part in terms of consumer expectations” (Interviewee I).

All in all, various interpretations of corporate social responsibility are in circulation. Rather than a solid general understanding, these different approaches might make it difficult to approach CSR from one business perspective effectively.

4.1.1.1 Valuation of CSR

In order to transcend the examination of the basic understanding of CSR, light has additionally been shed on the perceived importance of CSR. Hereby, insights on the stakeholders’ valuation on the topic became evident. Firstly, multiple stakeholders addressed a particular trend in the importance of the concept of CSR. For instance, interviewee A states:

“I think that [CSR importance] has changed .. yes. I think that is part of a trend, a social way in which companies are increasingly judged on their CSR and their social impact. ‘What is actually the right to exist of companies?’ Is often quoted. ‘Why are they here?’ I think that in the past that this is more likely to happen that companies are being taken accountable in the financial field. [...] I think that shifts to much more. Not only financially but towards socially; ‘was your contribution or impact?’” (Interviewee A)

Accordingly, interviewees argue that CSR is becoming more important because society is increasingly challenging the company’s social performance, rather than solely holding them accountable for a company’s financial performance. In addition, other interviewees follow this rationale, as the importance of CSR has increased tremendously over time, making the concept a necessity for a contemporary business. Correspondingly, several interviewees mentioned the notion of a corporate ‘purpose’. For instance, interviewee E states:

“If you have no purpose as a company, you will no longer participate. Then you are no longer attractive to young talent. Then you will no longer be taken seriously in the industry.

It has gone from bleak and dirty capitalism to pure necessity. [...]. It [a purpose] is essential in this modern age. Essential to guide your strategy. And in the end essential to do good and give back to society.” (Interviewee E)

Thus, based on this fragment it can be deduced that the notion of a purpose is used as an equivalent of corporate social responsibility, highlighting the necessity of a corporate purpose or meaning that reaches beyond financial gains. This understanding complies with CSR literature in which it is argued that when it comes to businesses, CSR is too often treated as a bolt-on to business operations, whereas it should be incorporated in the purpose and strategy of the business (Grayson, 2006; Marques-Mendes & Santos, 2016). However, this statement is nuanced by another interviewee who adds that the necessity of a purpose or a sense of corporate social responsibility depends on the type of company in question. Following this, a gambling customer explains:

“Do I think that’s [CSR] important... That depends a bit on what kind of company it is. For a company like Shell that actively uses raw materials and actually causes damage to society, I think this is more important than, for example, a service company or something.” (Interviewee L)

In a sense, CSR can be seen as an aspired balance in which the amount that organizations are expected to give back to society is determined based on the negative social or economic footprint they leave behind. Nevertheless, based on the data related to the interviewees’ valuation of the concept of CSR, it can be concluded that CSR has become increasingly important within contemporary society.

4.1.1.2 CSR in the gambling sector

Ensuing the discussion of a general view of CSR within society, CSR is additionally viewed through the lens of the gambling industry. Subsequently, all interviewees share the perception that consumer protection is the core component of the gambling firm’s social responsibility strategies. For instance, interviewee A addresses the following:

“[...] Yes consumer protection is in my opinion the most important part of CSR for gambling providers. Because I think we can make the most impact there.” (Interviewee A)

Thus, the term corporate impact reoccurs, addressing the corporate responsibility of diminishing the corporate footprint of the gambling sector: negative effects of products provided by the corporation, with the main negative risk of gambling being gambling addiction.

This complies with the academic vision that CSR entails efforts toward “minimizing negative environmental and social impacts and maximizing the positive impacts” (Grayson, 2006, p. 67).

Following this, interviewee C explains:

“I think the way I see it is what you do as a company to take that responsibility in relation to your role in society. [...] We offer games of chance and there are negative effects and they try to mitigate as much as possible. [...] But [responsible gaming] is actually 80% of our entire CSR policy. But of course, we also know that that is not the only thing, so we started looking beyond just about gaming when it comes to CSR about a year ago.” (Interviewee C)

Respectively, most employees agree that responsible gaming is seen as 80% of the entire CSR policy. Following this train of thought, several stakeholders imply that other CSR initiatives such as sustainability issues are not on the current agenda, as they “think it is experienced with them [board members] that as an organization we cannot do much more” (Interviewee C). This mentality could be the reason that CSR initiatives beyond RG are marginal and not valued as a priority within the board and other departments, whereas they could, in fact, diminish the corporate impact on society.

Another strategy which is a less top-of-mind CSR strategy among most employees yet very substantial to few is the contribution to society in the form of a yearly remittance to the Dutch state and various charities. More specifically, 60% goes to the Ministry of Finance, and the rest goes to NOC*NSF and the charities. Consequently, this remittance is seen as a form of giving back to society. For example, a gambling customer states:

“I think that is part of their core business, that they also make part of their money available for recreational sports and handicapped sports.” (Interviewee M)

Hence, from the extensive evaluation of CSR in the gambling sector, it can be concluded that responsible gaming is seen as the primary form of CSR, and the remittance is a close second important manner of giving back to society. However, other forms of CSR such as sustainability, are generally not valued as a corporate necessity in the gambling industry.

4.1.2 CSR communication strategies

Based on the notion that 80% of CSR strategies in the gambling industry refers to the responsible gaming policy, both internal and external stakeholders express that current CSR communication is marginal. Several employees seem to experience this as a challenge, as there is a current deficiency of a communication strategy and a point in time where new initiatives could and should be contrived. For instance, interviewee D states:

“No, besides communicating responsible gaming it’s difficult, in this year’s annual report it has solely been noted that we rapport on two sustainable development goals and we started

thinking and working on other goals last year, but we do not communicate that explicitly. And we may do more than we think, but we do not yet have a very clear picture [of what to communicate].” (Interviewee D)

Nevertheless, even though CSR communication is perceived as negligible, no interviewees articulated the requirement of additional communication on this topic. However, besides an absence of the need for CSR communication revolving CSR subjects such as sustainability and environmental contributions, several stakeholders do express a need for more transparency within external communication. More specifically, several stakeholders emphasize the need for a more transparent reporting of the remittance, in which communication should voice how this remittance is constructed and how it contributes explicitly to various charities within society. Interviewee I explains:

“Well, that’s always a tricky one. [...] The subject of sports contributions certainly comes forward, but if you ask me ‘how well does our general charity contribution shine through?’ then I think we are too modest. Take a look at how Postcode Lottery does that, they almost say that you [as a customer] only buy that lottery ticket to support the charities. So they highlight their charity contributions much more. [...] Our remittance was around 150 million [euros] last year. And that is serious money and I think we should show that more.” (Interviewee I)

This shows an organizational recognition of the need for more communication on the contribution to charities. From an external perspective, players also articulate a current lack of knowledge on what the company specifically does to contribute to society. Players say that they do encounter communication of the firm’s charity contributions, yet “it still happens to be dubious” (Interviewee M). They emphasize that more concrete transparency of where the money is going to would lead to a better understanding of corporate societal contributions. For instance, a gambling customer proposed:

“But I actually think it is only possible if they mention, for example, how much goes to recreational sports. That it is very transparent. And I just mention something. € 5000 goes to this sports club and € 3000 to that schoolyard. Then I think it will be communicated much wider and it will be accepted in any case.” (Interviewee M)

Thus, both internal and external stakeholders experience a need for more transparent communication, resulting in a possible increase in transferring the firm’s CSR efforts efficiently.

4.1.3 CSR initiatives

Based on the interviewees’ comprehensive CSR perspectives within the gambling industry, it can be concluded that current CSR initiatives are restricted to RG communication. Other initiatives are scarce, yet are existing as initiatives aim to address the predicament regarding the lack of transparency within the CSR communication strategies. In addition, initial steps are put forward to tackle

sustainability issues as “now is the time to do more” (Interviewee B). All in all, CSR is seen as a topic with increasing importance, which needs to mature and be woven into all organizational processes.

This corresponds with the following statement by interviewee D:

“I think the priority has indeed been elsewhere, but you can also see that the subject and the theme are still maturing. You have to start something and then you start very small, which develops just like the department. So we are developing into a more mature institution about social responsibility. We have started but we are certainly not there yet, with the result.” (Interviewee D)

Therefore, corporate awareness regarding the importance of CSR is growing rapidly, yet extensive efforts toward a comprehensive CSR communication strategy are yet to be made.

4.2 Internal Responsible Gaming operations

The next chapter explores responsible gaming operations through an internal lense. This theme addresses organizational objectives, internal challenges in regard to responsible gaming processes, a general employee perspective, and lastly, possible improvements regarding internal operations. Accordingly, the following sub-question will be examined: ‘How is RG communicated internally within the gambling sector?’. In figure 6, an overview of the results of theme 2 is provided.

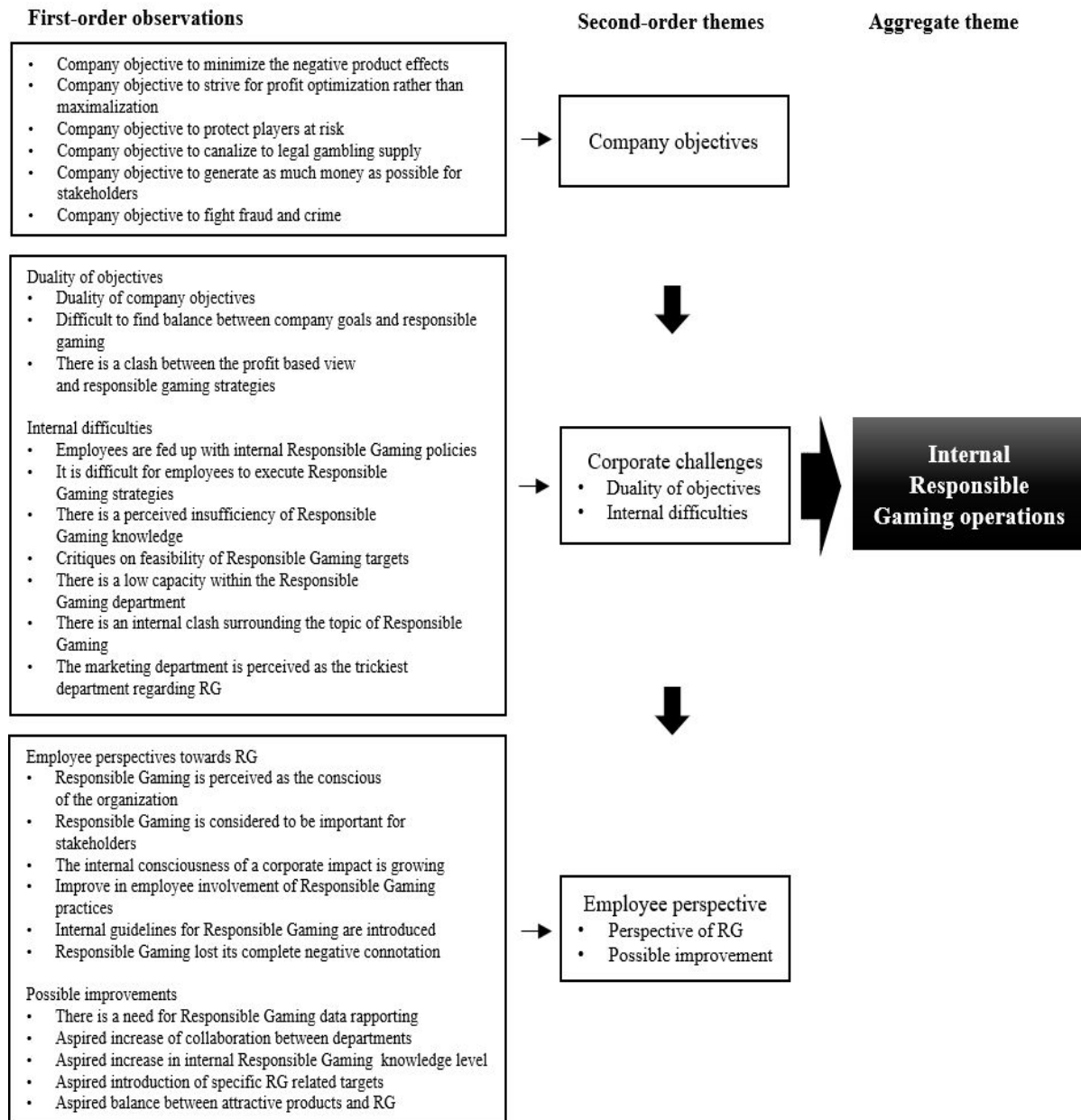


Figure 6. Visualization of qualitative results of theme 2

4.2.1 Company objectives

In order to fully grasp the internal operations regarding responsible gaming, an assessment is made of the overall organizational objectives and the role of responsible gaming within the organization. Throughout the data, the company objectives were mentioned frequently and consistently. Naturally, these objectives are tied to a hierarchy of significance, with the objective to channel customers to the legal gambling offer as the primary goal mentioned by all employees. Secondly, generating a remittance and executing the Dutch gambling policy are goals that are mentioned by most of the employees. Interestingly enough, a vast array of other goals is mentioned solely by few employees. In figure 7, an overview of the company objectives is provided, based on the perceived significance derived from the data. Therefore, the organization aims to abide by a great assemble of objectives, which at first glance seems to generate a paradoxical complexity.

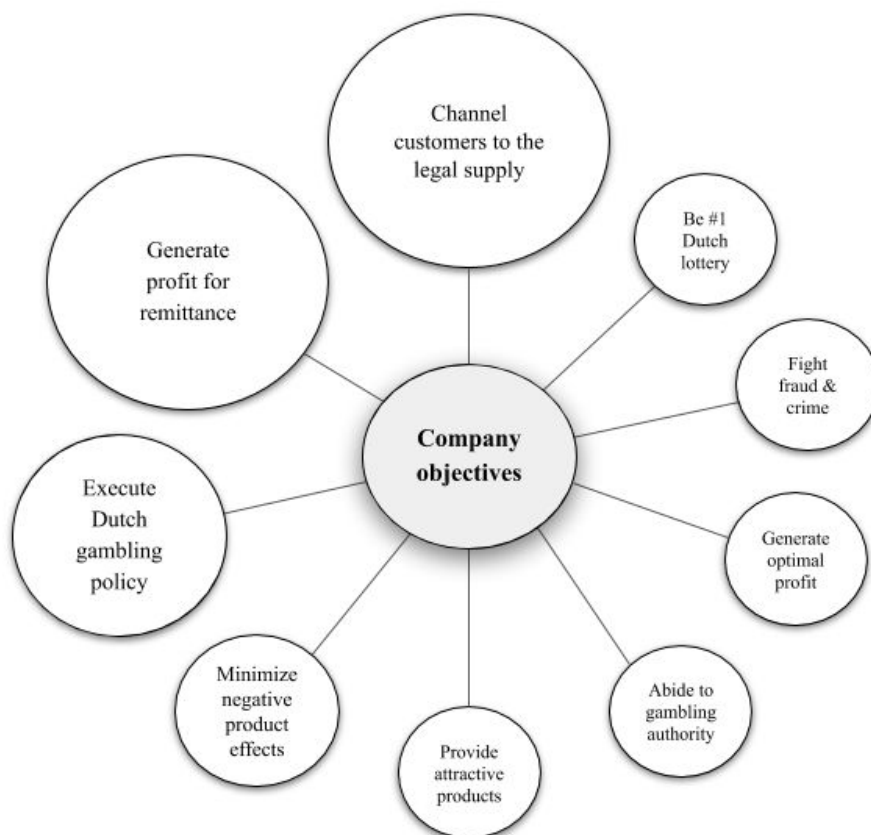


Figure 7. Overview of company objectives based on perceived significance

4.2.2 Challenges

This section addresses the internal challenges with regard to executing and translating the responsible gaming policy into a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy. Firstly, the internal differences will be addressed.

4.2.2.1 Duality of company objectives

By assessing the prior overview of company objectives, it becomes apparent that a few objectives could potentially conflict. Subsequently, this conflict has been voiced by many internal interviewees, with a specific focus on the corporate dilemma of on the one hand, wanting to channel customers to the legal offer, i.e., to create a responsible gaming environment, and on the other hand generating as much money as possible to contribute to society. Following this, interviewee F states:

“The main reason we exist is channelization, but the second reason we exist is the remittance. The focus is mainly on [...] bringing in the money, but also the channeling, but the two are at odds with each other. On the one hand, you want to generate as much money as possible for the shareholders. And on the other hand, you have to make sure you are responsible. And that is very difficult, considering the channel.” (Interviewee F)

This interview extract exposes the internal dilemma that is apparent within the organization, which emphasizes the quest for balance between being a responsible corporation and generating profit which can be remitted to the Dutch state and several charities. Various interviewees note that the current internal emphasis is leaning toward a profit-based view, rather than a responsible view. Especially the marketing department is seen to focus on profit rather than communicating responsible gaming, as the latter is argued to result in a lower short term profit. At the same time, they are held accountable for reaching their commercial targets. However, the main objective of the CSR department is RG, which aims for a long term RG strategy. In turn, these perspectives might conflict regularly. Hence, interviewee F states:

“Yes, the dilemma of going for profit, in short, or going for responsible offer. [...] There is a difficult balance between all these rules and the commercial objective. [...] I have had an internal discussion about that. If you want, we can be the most responsible of all, but we will not have customers. Then we don't have people who are gambling addicts, but then you don't have people buying our products.” (Interviewee F)

4.2.2.2 Internal difficulties

Transcending the notion of a duality of organizational objectives, the current research sheds light on organizational operational challenges. In the past year, initiatives were introduced to diminish this

clash by introducing concrete responsible gaming KPIs aimed to establish a balance between the paradoxical corporate objectives. Interviewee B states:

“That is also the split we have as an organization because we are also sent out with high turnover targets. But we are working on it. We are also interested in a different side of the butterfly for the KPIs, which means that people [employees] really have to think about how they contribute to a responsible offer with their game, so I think these are good developments.” (Interviewee B)

Thus, it can be established that progress is currently being made regarding the internal quest for a desirable balance between company objectives. However, an efficient implementation of these KPIs lacks among employees, as employees voice a critical side note that even though this introduction of more concrete RG targets is welcomed with open arms, business directors remain highly accountable for their commercial KPIs as the corporate management “sometimes does not see that one [KPI] sometimes has an effect on the other” (Interviewee F). Thus, the efforts toward filling the gap between responsible gaming targets and commercial targets are appreciated, yet the execution of these new guidelines is experienced to be challenging.

Another internal difference is derived from the organizational structure, which consists of a mother brand that houses seven different games of chance, all tied to their own brand, product positioning, and target audience. Due to the different levels of product risks tied to a brand, one brand might need to be more strict regarding implementing RG into their marketing compared to other brands. Therefore, this adjustment of the internal responsible gaming policy to the specific brands and products results in a sense of ‘unfairness’ among brands, with an experienced gray area of responsible gaming expectations. Following this, interviewee D explains:

“Yes, it doesn't feel completely fair. While there are very good reasons for making a difference. But I think understanding and talking about where that trade-off is makes us understand each other more.” (Interviewee D)

Thus, a thorough understanding of the responsible gaming policies and the implementation choices is needed to increase the employees’ positive connotation of the term responsible gaming.

4.2.3 Employee perspectives of internal operations

From an internal perspective, responsible gaming can be comprehended as the “corporate conscience of the organization” (Interviewee B). Initially, this concept did not directly spark excitement as “people are not immediately inclined to take responsibility for it because they are not sufficiently familiar with it, for example” (Interviewee C). However, the term is enduring internal developments which will be addressed in the following section.

4.2.3.1 Employee perspective of Responsible Gaming

An important outcome of the current research is that several employees mention a shift in the negative connotation of responsible gaming, as all internal interviewees mention a variety of positive changes in relation to responsible gaming. For example, interviewee E mentions:

“I focus more on the long term and our corporate positioning, of which I think responsible gaming is an essential topic. I just noticed a year and a half ago that it is really seen as a dirty word, and you see that there is really a shift going on.” (Interviewee E)

Moreover, even though the execution might remain challenging in some situations, the importance of the term has been deeply settled within the organization. In addition, internal interviewees mention the increase in RG knowledge throughout the organization. Consequently, the sensed responsibility for the topic has transcended beyond the CSR department. Accordingly, interviewee D explains:

“It has gone from one person to something the whole organization has to deal with, and I also think it's a growing understanding that the topic is too important to attach to solely one function. [...] Everyone is a responsible Gaming officer and that awareness is growing more and more and I think that is the most important development within Dutch lottery.” (Interviewee D)

The latter potentially sparked a growing sense of responsibility for the term, which is reinforced by a blend of a repetitive emphasis on responsible gaming on a board level and thorough CEO involvement. Following this train of thought, interviewee C explains:

“So you can push it through with brute force, but that's not how people like the subject. But actually every time I got a chance, I mentioned that topic every time. This makes it more alive and what helped me a lot and it is undeniable that [CEO] has really embraced the subject.” (Interviewee C)

In addition, initiatives have been shared, which help elevate the knowledge level of employees and the management team in particular. For instance, the management team received a session at a gambling addiction treatment centre to learn about the consequences of gambling. The director of the institute explains:

“And to ensure that there is also sufficient knowledge in the corporate strategy and policy, the management came along and they had a very substantive presentation of 'what is actually gambling addiction, what happens in your head, what about the dopamine, what effect does that have.' So that they can take this into account, for example, in the development of advertising and marketing policy.” (Interviewee J)

Subsequently, the overall internal awareness of the importance of addressing responsible gaming has intensified. This can be explained by the scholarly recognition of the importance of CEOs and the top management team (TMT) in relation to shaping responsible and sustainable practices (Bansal & Song, 2017). Moreover, CEOs are often “willing to act in socially desirable ways to satisfy their need for meaningful existence” (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams & Ganapathi, 2007, p. 842). Therefore, these perceived positive developments regarding CSR practices are accumulated by an extensive top-down communication strategy.

4.2.3.2 Possible improvements

Even though clear progression is made regarding internal responsible gaming operations, participants do voice their aspired improvements. Firstly, the departments continue the quest for a balance between the previously discussed conflicting company objectives. In addition, a more internal agreement between departments is aspired, with the marketing department obtaining primary attention. A need for concrete RG guidelines and KPI reporting is shared in order to attain a satisfactory degree of agreement. More specifically, introducing an internal RG measurement tool could increase the implementation of RG efforts into commercially driven targets. For instance, concrete, consistent reporting on how many consumers are actually improving their gaming behavior responsibly could generate a better understanding of the effects of the RG efforts. Following this, interviewee F shares:

“Because with that [KPI] butterfly we also have the question of what the baseline measurement is. And then they [RG department] say they don’t know. But then they say that I am not being responsible, but if it is not measured it is quite difficult.” (Interviewee F)

This notion corresponds with the academic notion that there are no processes in place to monitor the effects of imposed regulatory changes (Blaszczynski et al., 2004). Even though this argument is raised in the early 2000s, similar problems are occurring in the current research. As a result, this lack of monitoring “prevents public policymakers from knowing (a) whether intended goals are met and (b) how to refine and improve the effectiveness of extant public policy” (Blaszczynski et al., 2014, p. 307).

In addition, future initiatives to strengthen internal collaboration processes are acknowledged. As responsible gaming is regarded as a complex or even paradoxical notion, employees stress the importance of working together to collectively grasp the corporate dilemma of, in short, choosing for generating profit or choosing for responsible offer. Interviewee D refers to the ambition to bring together different organizational disciplines in order to understand the opposing trains of thought. Interviewee D explains:

“Thinking about that dilemma is really good to stimulate. Because there is no black and white. There are dilemmas that need to be answered. That is the work of a team. [...] Sometimes they may clash with each other, but maybe they can work together in some way.” (Interviewee D)

All in all, it can be concluded that internal processes revolving responsible gaming are undergoing severe positive developments. However, internal knowledge of RG, RG reporting, and internal collaboration could potentially accelerate these processes to the next level.

4.3 External Responsible Gaming operations

The following chapter addresses the external responsible gaming operations within the gambling industry. Through qualitative coding, light has been shed on several axial codes that emerged from the data, being external communication strategies, corporate challenges, the stakeholder perspective toward responsible gaming, including initiatives and future ambitions. In figure 8, an overview of the results of theme 3 is provided. This chapter aims to answer the following sub-question: how is Responsible Gaming addressed through external CSR strategies?

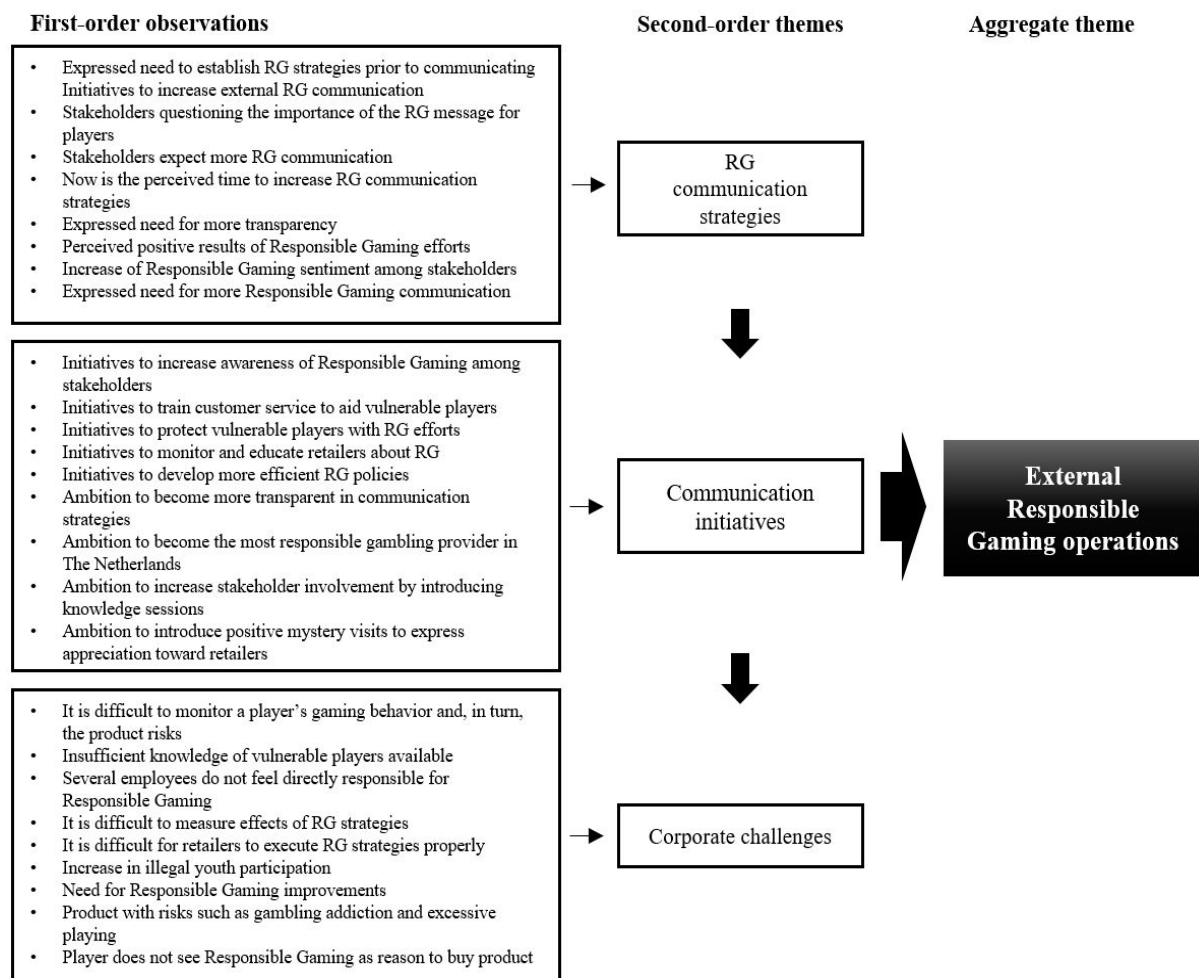


Figure 8. Visualization of qualitative results of theme 3

4.3.1 Responsible Gaming communication strategies

In order to efficiently transfer a message to the public, a comprehensive communication strategy needs to be established. Throughout the conducted interviews, various stakeholders mention that such a responsible gaming strategy is not yet embedded within the organization. Currently, responsible gaming is communicated externally solely to meet legal requirements, yet the “game brands do not breathe responsibility” (Interviewee D). Even though the value of responsible gaming is seeded inside the organization, internal controversy remains when it comes to the manner of communicating it to the outside world. Accordingly, interviewee D explains:

“I think there is really an opportunity in the position of the most responsible provider. I think we really got a USP there. [...] I don't believe there is any employee who really wants to enhance or increase addiction sensitivity. So the intention is really good and in terms of implementation, we are still debating what we want more from now on. That is the crossroads where we currently stand.”
(Interviewee D)

Based on this interview extract, it can be concluded that responsible gaming is seen as a unique selling point (USP), which creates value for the organization.

4.3.2 Communication initiatives

Following the notion of RG as a corporate USP, interviewees voice the value of communicating RG within marketing campaigns, in contrast with solely communicating the bare legal minimum. Several employees mention initiatives toward a more solid RG communication strategy in the near future, which for the sake of internal operations remains classified during the proceeding of the current research. Even though the specific implementation of future strategies remains confidential, positive attitudes toward these initiatives dominate throughout the data. For instance, interviewee H states:

“I think that actually responsible gaming, or responsibility in general, can instead of having a negative effect on your market also have a positive effect. Heineken is a huge front runner in that, who started doing a Formula 1 [...] campaign along the lines of ‘if you drive, never drink’. [...] [Classified brand] always thought ‘let's tell as little as possible.’ And now they want to run a RG campaign [...] because they see that you can position it wonderfully.” (Interviewee H)

Thus, examples of previous campaigns expressing their take on corporate social responsibility are valued by internal stakeholders. Consequently, various stakeholders mention a positive attitude toward the development of a communication strategy with responsible gaming as its core deliverable.

4.3.3 Challenges

Even though responsible gaming is seen as a value for organizations, other interviewees challenge the notion of responsible gaming as a USP, questioning to what degree customers actually value responsible gaming communication efforts, as the vast majority of customers are recreational players with no worrisome sensitivity for gambling products. Accordingly, interviewee F explains:

“Honestly most customers won't care. They are happy that it [RG] is there [...] but you set up your things for the 5%, so 95% [of customers] are not bothered by things. So that's kind of the difficulty.” (Interviewee F)

Remarkably, all players who participated in the current research affirm this judgment as they state that they appreciate responsible gaming, yet it would most likely not add to the perceived value of the organization and most definitely not increase the intentions to consume the gambling products. Responsible Gaming is seen as “more of an ethical discussion for an organization, rather than something to take into account as a customer” (Interviewee I). In turn, additional communication of responsible gaming is not directly desired by customers. This corresponds with the Reno Model proposed by Blaszczynski et al. (2004), which implies that responsible gaming strategies should primarily target high-risk individuals of the consumers. Following this notion, the degree of exposure to responsible gaming strategies should be determined based on the perceived risks and harm of gambling products. This generates the question of whether responsible gaming should play a central role in general marketing outings. Thus, it can be concluded that responsible gaming communication strategies remain quite minimalistic, and the aspired degree of responsible gaming communication varies among stakeholders. This debate complicates the process of a comprehensive responsible gaming communication strategy.

Moreover, as the company houses seven different brands with different risks regarding gambling sensitivity, most of the interviewees disregard the need for a responsible gaming strategy for the brands other than sports betting, as the risks of the products are perceived negligible. For instance, interviewee G states:

“Lotteries are not that popular with minors at all. People are not tempted to buy a hundred lottery tickets. That's really not excessive gaming behavior. This is not the case with lotteries, but especially in sports betting you mainly have youngsters who also like to bet on football matches. So I think it is especially interesting to do for [sportsbetting brand], and a little less for lotteries.” (Interviewee G)

As demonstrated, most employees voice the need for a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy for their sports betting brand. Nevertheless, other responsible gaming measurements are already put in place, which tend to not be top-of-mind among employees, as they do not mention the risks of for example another product accompanied by gambling risks: scratch card. Hence, employees sometimes tend to overlook the risks of the other gambling products. Remarkably, a retailer disclosed that he perceives another company product, scratch cards, to be the primary product that potentially cumulates gambling addiction. The retailer explains:

“Someone who is addicted wants quick cash and then scratch cards are of course the most attractive for that. [...] I have the impression that with scratch cards it is more likely that you spend more money on it than with Toto, as you buy more unconsciously.” (Interviewee H)

Hence, this discovery of possible discrepancies between the internal and external perceived harms and sensitivity of the products needs more consideration, as this could potentially indicate a neglect of certain product harms in contemporary and future responsible gaming communication strategies.

4.4 Corporate Reputation Management

The following chapter addresses the apparent theme of corporate reputation management (CRM) in relation to operators in the gambling sector. Especially within the gambling sector, an organizational reputation received exhaustive appraisal as it can be argued to be particularly peculiar compared to other commercial sectors. Figure 9 provides an overview of how the overall theme of CRM is composed. Accordingly, this structure follows the derived axial codes or second-order themes: the general corporate reputation, external critiques, public opinion, reputation initiatives, and responsible gaming within the gambling industry. Comprehensively, this section aims to answer the following sub-question: how does CSR contribute to corporate Reputation Management Strategies?

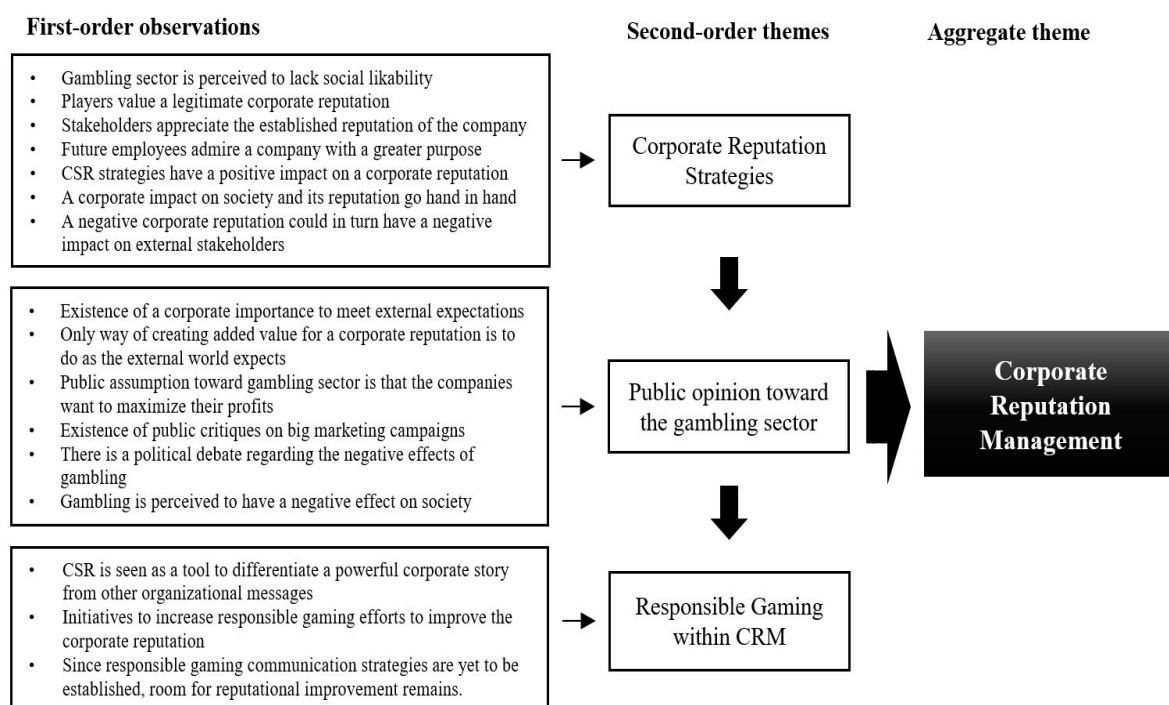


Figure 9. Visualization of qualitative results of theme 4

4.4.1 Corporate reputation strategies

When it comes to the gambling industry, it can be established that the perceived risks of the product influence the overall reputation of the corporation. The same goes for lottery firms, who arguably do not have the initial likability of the public as their products are accompanied by mental and financial harms. Through the qualitative interviews, several interviewees bring up this negative character of gambling companies. For instance, interviewee D elaborates:

“Lotteries don't have the initial likeability, some people find us a necessary evil that does more bad than good in society because we offer a product with a risk. And the experience is that we solely want to make money from it.” (Interviewee D)

This interview indicates an internal awareness of the ambiguous positioning of gambling firms within society. In addition, an employee adds that it is important to be a safe and reliable sender of gambling brands because “lotteries sometimes have the disadvantage that people think there is a catch” (interviewee G). Hence, it can be concluded that a strong and established brand reputation is truly important within this particular sector.

In addition, the employees shed light on the fact that an established corporate reputation leads to a corporate advantage for attracting new desirable employees. For the gambling sector, it is argued that this sector has an increasing disadvantage as the newer generations value future employers to have “a nice message and a nice goal” (interviewee F). Interviewee F continues:

“It is simply much more important among generation Z. For instance, maybe Shell has a nice message but the things they do in Africa in South America are not so nice and they notice that fewer people want to work with them. And together with those investment bankers without a purpose, they attract fewer people.” (Interviewee F)

In this case, it is shared that the company has experienced some incidents where potential future employees denied the position as they felt moral hardship when it comes to working for a company that promotes gambling products. Thus, corresponding with the findings of Roberts & Dowling (2002) and Heikkurinen (2010), it is argued that customers and employees are attracted to high-reputation firms. However, to take it one step further, the notion of a corporate purpose is acknowledged. Again, this is where a solid CSR strategy comes in, as Melo & Garrido-Morgado (2012) propose that CSR engagement is the most effective among all managerial practices for building a sustainable competitive advantage and a strong corporate reputation. It is argued that in contemporary society, the newer generations do not want to work for a company without a purpose. Correspondingly, establishing a trustworthy organization with a solid CSR communication strategy becomes increasingly vital for an organization.

4.4.2 Public opinion toward the gambling sector

When it comes to the gambling sector, the specific positioning of the case organization is quite particular, as it is a state operation. Back in the day, the Dutch state has introduced the lottery and sports betting brand to “ensure that a responsible offer is regulated and responsible and that is played by many that only as few people as possible go to the illegal offer where they are unprotected and

gambling irresponsibly” (Interviewee F). Thus, the organization’s origin lies with the Dutch state, which is a particular corporate position within society. In turn, this affects the public appraisal of a corporate reputation. From a player perspective, interviewee L explains:

“I think it is actually quite strange that it [the organization] belongs to the state. [...] I can imagine that there must be some kind of regulation but I find it strange that the state seems to stimulate gambling. It does have a dubious appearance.” (Interviewee L)

Thus, it is argued that, since the company provides gambling products, the state indirectly stimulates the negative consequences of gambling. In contrast with this dubious appearance, interviewees argue that a state-owned company is obliged to take on an exemplary role within society. To put this in context, the organizational context of involving a state operation, providing products with risks while simultaneously generating money for the state and charities results in a dual corporate appearance. Interviewee B explains:

“We still have a product that is a risk for a small group of people. So yes how do you ensure that you track down those people as quickly as possible and that you protect them against themselves. [...] If an organization generates money for the state and charities it would be a little weird if the company does so through negatively affecting others.” (Interviewee B)

Again, light is shed on the duality of the company goals, which in this context refers to the potentially dual reputation of the lottery firm. Moreover, participants note that this duality has been brought under attention by a Dutch satirical television program. Following this, interviewee F explains:

“On the one hand, you want to earn as much money as possible for the shareholders. And on the other hand, you have to make sure you are responsible. And that is very difficult, considering the channel. In the episode of Arjen Lubach he also says ‘you want to be responsible yet at the same time you want all those marketing prizes.’ That is conflicting.” (Interviewee F)

The previous interview extract refers to external critiques that the marketing campaigns receive an appraisal, which leads to an increase in brand awareness and a possible increase in revenue. In turn, it is argued that these marketing efforts are not in line with responsible gaming strategies as they often criticized for excessively encouraging the public to buy gambling products. Thus, it can be concluded that a fine line exists between corporate reputation, responsible gaming, and commercially driven campaigns.

4.4.3 Responsible Gaming within reputation management strategies

In order to strengthen the corporate reputation within society, CSR is seen as a tool to differentiate a compelling corporate story from other organizational messages. From an employee perspective, interviewee D states:

“I just think it is very important that we can tell the story of why we are there and what we do. But also how we do that, so responsible gaming is important. And that is part of the story we have to tell. If there is nothing to say, we are just a large factory that sells lottery tickets, and that is of course also possible. On the one hand, we are indeed marketing a commercial product, but we also have a story with it.” (Interviewee D)

Thus, responsible gaming is seen as a unique element that can be utilized to strengthen the corporate message. In addition, the strength of storytelling is addressed, as the organization aspires to be more than ‘just a large factory that sells lottery tickets’. Furthermore, interviewees mention the thought that a positive societal impact goes hand in hand with an excellent corporate reputation. Therefore, an emphasis on how the firm operates responsibly and how the firm is highly committed to protecting its customers from potential product risks could add to the complete story and perception of a valuable organizational purpose. However, since responsible gaming communication strategies are yet to be established, room for reputational improvement remains.

4.5 Stakeholder relation management

The fifth chapter discusses the discovered patterns within the qualitative data regarding stakeholder management within the gambling sector. Figure 10 provides an overview of the main theme of stakeholder relation management, its connecting sub-themes or axial codes, and a list of exemplary open observations. Following the structure of the axial codes, the corporate stakeholders will be illustrated and explained first. Moreover, the underlying relations between these stakeholders and the gambling firm are examined. Finally, the stakeholder perspective toward responsible gaming is assessed, which provides for a better understanding of how these strategies are received among various corporate stakeholders. Accordingly, this theme addresses the following sub-question: how do stakeholders (e.g., employees, retailers, players) see the value of Responsible Gaming in the gambling sector?

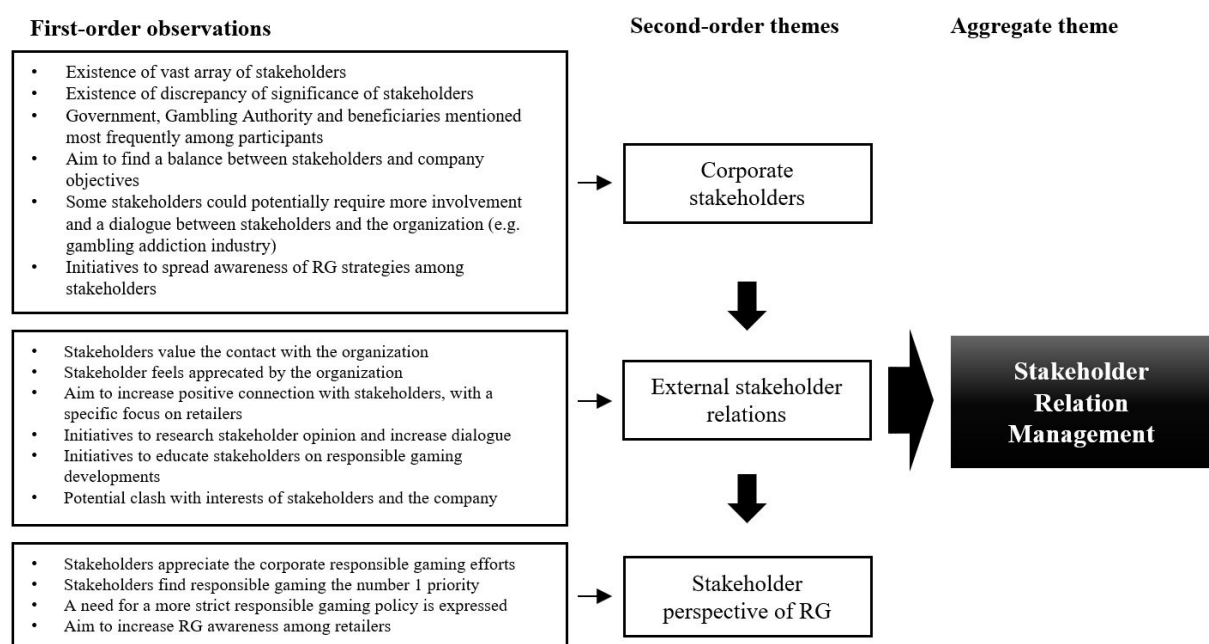


Figure 10. Visualization of qualitative results of theme 5

4.5.1 Corporate stakeholders within the gambling sector

In order to gain a better understanding of stakeholder management patterns throughout the qualitative data set, an assessment is made of the overall stakeholder structure and the associated communication strategies toward these stakeholders. Throughout the data, the recognition of stakeholders appeared frequently and consistently. Naturally, throughout the data, these stakeholders can be assessed using a hierarchy of significance and frequency (see figure 11). Following this suggestion, it can be established that the government, divided into several ministries, is most often mentioned by the interviewees which in turn assumes a high level of stakeholder significance. This can be explained by

the construction that the organization is state-owned, resulting in a mutual dependence of both parties. Secondly, the Gambling Authority is perceived as an important stakeholder, as this organization monitors whether gambling policies, for instance, the responsible gaming policy are adhered to. Moreover, an important stakeholder who is mentioned slightly less frequently among interviewees, are the beneficiaries who are dependent on a corporate societal contribution in the form of a yearly remittance. From a responsible gaming perspective, interviewees consider this a secondary stakeholder. This complies with the theoretical contributions by Clarkson (1995), who also differentiates ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ stakeholders. Regarding a primary or participant stakeholder, one’s participation is crucial for the survival of the corporation, whereas secondary or non-participant stakeholders influence and affect the corporation and vice versa, yet are not essential for its corporate survival (Metcalf, 1998, Yang & Basile, 2019). Next, in order of stakeholder significance based on the conducted interviews are employees and customers. Finally, a small assemblage of other stakeholders is indicated by only a small portion of the research sample. All in all, it is evident that the company aims to take a compound variety of stakeholders into account.

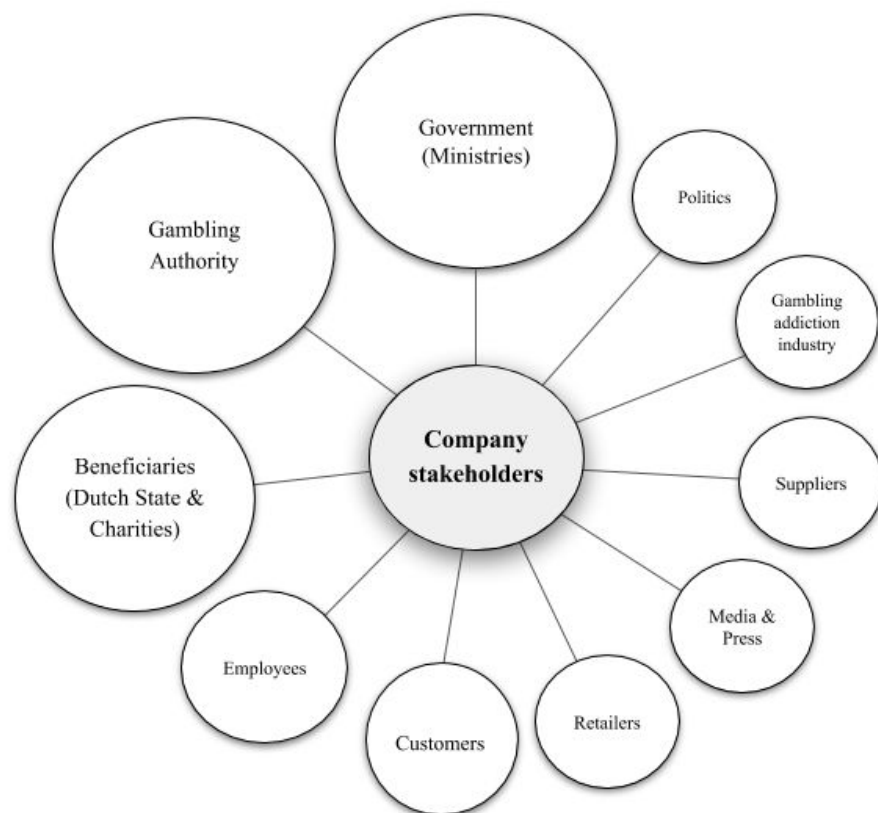


Figure 11. Overview of company stakeholders based on perceived significance

4.5.2 External stakeholder relations

As internal relations have been previously discussed in relation to internal responsible gaming operations, this section focuses explicitly on relations with external stakeholders. In general, the stakeholder relationships are perceived as pleasant among research participants. For example, the director of a gambling addiction treatment centre notes:

“I feel that the companies’ prevention policy and objectives are the same as with [gambling addiction treatment centre]. I think the Dutch Lottery recognizes that there is an X number of players [...] who carry addiction disease, so for those people, we must work together with both parties so they do not get sicker. [...] I notice that through the frequent contacts we have, the relationship deepens. [...] I experience that as very pleasant.” (Interviewee J)

Therefore, the current relationships between both parties are appreciated from a stakeholder perspective. More specifically, the objectives of both parties appear to correspond which emanates a more harmonious partnership. However, one specific stakeholder group is argued to have stakeholder objectives that coincide with the corporate objectives: namely those of retailers. In the gambling sector, retailers are expected to implement the companies’ responsible gaming policy to the best of their abilities. It is argued that this policy, in which retailers are asked to monitor gambling behavior and adhere to restrictions in buying behavior, can clash with the commercial objectives of the retailers. Accordingly, interviewee B explains:

“I think retailers are very important because they are the ones who have direct contact with the consumer, and they also have to implement some of our rules that also bother them because if they sell fewer lottery tickets they receive less commission.” (Interviewee B)

As a result, the responsible gaming policy could have a negative impact on retailer sales rates, as these high-intensity gamblers generate a relatively high revenue. Therefore, while adhering a strict responsible gaming policy within retail is essential to the gambling firm, the retailer might experience a crux between the gambling firm’s objectives and the retailer’s personal motives. To explain this dilemma, these players are arguably the “chicken with the golden eggs” (interviewee J). The director of a gambling addiction institute explains:

“These players are considered the chicken with the golden eggs. Then you as a retailer have to adhere to the prevention policy by asking these players questions like “oh, is this actually going well, can you afford this? Are you not playing too much?” That is something you would rather not do because then you will lose that player, and that is not good in terms of turnover.” (Interviewee J)

As retailers are being monitored on the execution of this policy, this examination is accompanied by possible negative sanctions if the execution is not up to standards. Hence, it is argued by interviewees that this retailer's dilemma and these negative sanctions could have a negative effect on the overall stakeholder relation.

In order to counter this potentially negative impact on the stakeholder relation, internal interviewees mention initiatives to incorporate a positive twist to responsible gaming in the retail sector. By not only sanctioning retailers that underperform in regards to responsible gaming, employees look for ways to reward retailers when they perform well. From an employee perspective, interviewee I explains:

"That's why we also want positive mystery visits. Do you know the BOB campaign, regarding no drunk driving? There you got a keyring if you had a good result in the alcohol check. We are now looking at that too; for example, can we have retailers redeem points for something fun, or can we, for example, give away a lottery ticket [...] so that people see that we not only punish but that we are also rewarding positively." (Interviewee I)

Thus, the company shows initiatives to continuously improve stakeholder relationships. Moreover, several interviewees voice possible improvements regarding stakeholder communication, as the vast array of stakeholders within the gambling sector requires an extensive stakeholder management strategy. Applying this note to academic literature, this corresponds with the scholarly argument that the main corporate emphasis shifted from immediate profit to creating long-term value and mutual friendships between stakeholders (Rahman et al., 2002; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Whereas several vital stakeholders are proactively involved in the open dialogue toward responsible gaming, others are only involved more sporadically. Again, the qualitative data sheds light on initiatives to increase stakeholder relations by facilitating responsible gaming knowledge. From an employee perspective, interviewee B states:

"I have a lot of contact with several of those parties, but quite sporadically and I would like to have a little more grip on that. Now it is often reactive [...] but they do not know very much about what we are doing. And I don't really know what they are doing. And I want to do better, but that takes a lot of time. And there are only three of us." (Interviewee B)

Ideally, contact with external stakeholders would be intensified, yet internal interviewees note the existence of low capacity within the responsible gaming department. For instance, interviewee B aspires to introduce expert meetings with several stakeholder groups, with the aim to involve them more in the developments and achievements regarding responsible gaming. Interestingly enough, these developments can be assessed using CSR literature by Morsing & Schultz (2006), who propose

three CSR communication strategies based on how companies strategically engage in CSR in respect to their stakeholders. Based on the data, it can be argued that the organization is undergoing a transformation from the second level of stakeholder communication, being stakeholder response strategy, to the third and final level, being stakeholder involvement strategy. This third strategy is in line with the stakeholder response strategy that stakeholder expectations should be investigated and addressed. However, the final strategy delves deeper by assuming that informing and surveying the stakeholders is not sufficient, as there needs to be a systematic dialogue with stakeholders as a basis for the development of CSR initiatives (Duthler & Dhanesh, 2018; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Therefore, even though these initiatives remain future aspirations, the data shows a profound internal motivation to continuously enhance stakeholder relationships, leading to an internal transformation and elevation of CSR communication strategies.

4.5.3 Stakeholder perspective toward Responsible Gaming

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that internal awareness of the importance of responsible gaming within the lottery section is becoming increasingly important. However, insights on the external perspective toward responsible gaming are equally meaningful. Consequently, interviewees share their outtakes on internal research in which various stakeholders (.e.g. retailers, shareholders, supervisors, suppliers, sports associations, charities, media) were asked to share which corporate topics they find important. This initiative affirms the increased importance of the academic notion of stakeholder theory, which suggests that organizations yearn to understand the needs and aspirations of all of their stakeholders, including governments, employees, investors, communities, customers, or suppliers. In recent years, the main emphasis shifted from immediate profit to creating long-term value and mutual friendships between stakeholders (Rahman et al., 2002; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Relating this stakeholder theory to the current subject matter, it is shared that “all stakeholders believe that responsible gaming in games of chance should be the number 1 priority of Dutch lottery” (Interviewee D). Interviewee D continues:

“There are stakeholders who say “it really shouldn't matter that you lose money on some game brands [...] if you ensure that people participate in a responsible and regulated product offer.” [...] But there are also stakeholders who see that we need turnover to realize a remittance [...] so we also have to ensure that we have a very attractive product offer. But all stakeholders think that playing responsibly is the most important thing.” (Interviewee D)

Hence, responsible gaming is valued as the main corporate priority among external stakeholders. However, a notion with a challenging character regarding responsible gaming is the propagation of a firm policy. Although several stakeholders mention their positive attitude toward the policy, others

question the practical effectiveness of the strategies toward getting customers to gamble responsibly. For instance, interviewee I elaborates from a player perspective:

“I think it [responsible gaming policy] is good because the Dutch Lottery has certain responsibilities, so that should really be the case, but I am curious to what extent it will really work for someone. Suppose you are already in the direction of a gambling addiction then you do not think it has a point. They’ll think: ‘I want to gamble as much as I want.’”
(Interviewee I)

Thus, certain doubts about the effectiveness of responsible gaming strategies are expressed. It is argued that the responsibility of gambling in a responsible manner lies with the customers. Hence, it is questioned where the sensed responsibility for gambling responsibly lays with the organization, the government, or the player itself. Tying this to the theoretical framework, according to Brading (2001) the extent and nature of this responsibility are complex and uncertain “since the limits and extent of the duty of care held by the gambling industry to its patrons are yet to be clearly determined and articulated in law” (Błaszczynski et al., 2004, p. 311). Another player continues:

“I think it is quite difficult to justify [as a company]. A company can propagate responsible gaming but in the end, I think it is a question of how an individual deals with his playing behavior. But if you do not do it as a company, you are of course not doing the right thing.” (Interviewee M)

Accordingly, some shed light on the complexity of the responsible gaming in practice. However, all stakeholders agree that responsible gaming is and should be a core element within the gambling firm’s business operations.

4.6 Opening of the Dutch gambling market

The final chapter of the result section examines an important anticipated change within the Dutch gambling market, as the online gambling market is expected to open in the near future. Subsequently, more formerly illegal competitors will enter the Dutch online gambling market, which will affect the contemporary dynamics within the sector. In turn, firms within the sector aim to anticipate this change as much as possible in order to establish a sustainable position within the market. The current research explores the perceptions toward these developments, with a particular focus on the dynamic role of responsible gaming. This is done by discussing all axial-codes which were derived from the data. In figure 12 an overview of the holistic theme, the axial codes, and the open observations is provided. Following this structure, this section addresses the corporate consequences of the liberalization of the Dutch market are addressed, along with several stakeholder perspectives and the changing importance of responsible gaming. Therefore, this chapter aims to address the following sub-question: how does the liberalization of the gambling market impact the value of Responsible Gaming in the gambling sector?

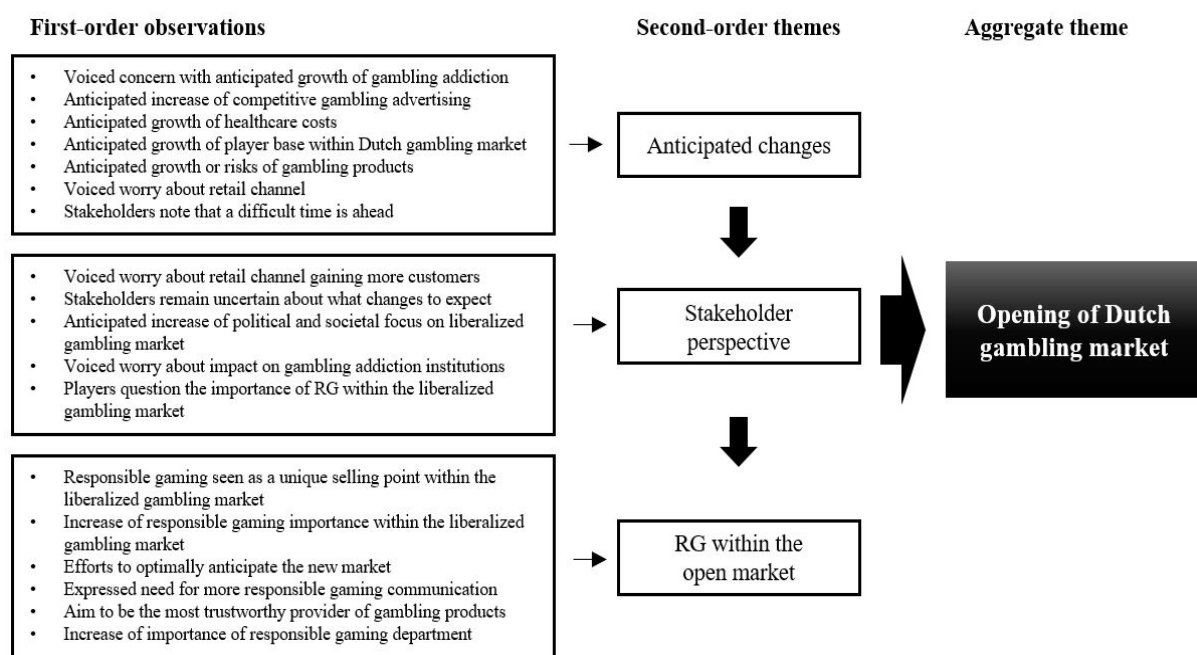


Figure 12. Visualization of qualitative results of theme 6

4.6.1 Anticipated changes within the Dutch marketing sector

In January 2021, the legal online gambling market is expected to open (Wet Kansspelen op afstand, n.d.). This means that international and currently illegal gambling companies can apply for licenses within the Dutch gambling sector. This new law grants the gambling authority additional powers to tackle illegal online offers. In turn, a substantial amount of new providers will compete with the

current offer of the focal company of this research. An apparent pattern throughout the data is the interviewees' anticipation of these legal developments and the changes that come with it. Firstly, interviewees within the organization mention an increase of competition and marketing violence of international firms within the Dutch market. For example, interviewee E states:

“And when the market opens up, the fight will only get fiercer if we directly fight international giants. Then we really have to learn how to win against those competitors of Malta in Gibraltar. But that is also very good. I admire how we arm ourselves against that fight.” (Interviewee E)

All internal interviewees voice this expected increase in the intensity of competition within the gambling market. Moreover, another anticipated change mentioned by interviewees of the current research is the increase of players, as a higher intensity of competition will, in turn, result in more competitive advertising for gambling products. According to interviewee J, ‘the more they advertise, the more people buy’, which is argued to result in an anticipated increase in amount of players within the Dutch gambling market.

In addition to an increase of gambling providers and players, interviewees share the expectation that the liberalization of the online gambling market will prompt a higher gambling sensitivity of the products, as the range of games offered by the company will be expanded. Interviewee A explains:

“That means that we are going to offer live betting options in sports betting and casino games. And that type of new games is characterized by higher dynamics, a faster game where you know sooner whether you have won something or not. That type of game is actually more sensitive to developing problematic playing behavior. So that also means that we will expand that range of tasks in the field of responsible gaming and protecting our players.” (Interviewee A)

Thus, all the anticipated changes mentioned by the interviewees imply a need for a discreetly drafted responsible gaming strategy in order to protect the players to the best of the company's abilities. Following this, internal initiatives are instigated to prepare for this market transformation. For example, several interviewees mentioned the increased importance of monitoring the players' gambling behavior, to foresee patterns of gambling addiction. Interviewee A elaborates on this:

“The monitoring of gaming behavior will become much better. We are also installing specialist software for this. Where the whole gaming behavior is analyzed and detects signals that can indicate problematic playing behavior on which we can plan interventions. So we will first implement this on those new casino games. And learn from that. And chances are that we will also apply elements of it to our lottery products.” (Interviewee A)

From an internal perspective, the liberalization of the online gambling market results in a more advanced responsible gaming strategy, followed by the intent to utilize more data and monitoring tools. Moreover, interviewees state that they expect that the responsible gaming department will expand, as the importance of responsible gaming becomes increasingly fundamental within the organization.

4.6.2 Stakeholder perspective of the liberalization of the gambling market

Considering the scope of this research, the stakeholder perspectives on the anticipated liberalization of the online gambling market should not be overlooked. Taking the perspective of the gambling addiction treatment industry, a concern about the expected growth of the number of gambling addicts is expressed by the interviewees. Interviewee I explains that the gambling firm cannot do more than implement a good prevention strategy. Following the notion that an increase in gambling players is anticipated, a gambling customer continues:

“We all know that lying and cheating and manipulating is an art among the gambling addicts. So the prevention strategy is only effective to a certain extent. So there will be a lot more people entering healthcare and having to be treated under the health insurance law. So this has an effect on the total healthcare costs.” (Interviewee J)

Hence, interviewees share a concern with the expected acceleration of healthcare costs for the Dutch government, as a substantial increase of gambling addicts is anticipated.

Another interesting finding involves the interviewees’ thoughts revolving the specific anticipated impact the open market will have for the retail channel. interviewees explain that in the contemporary situation, prior to the liberalization of the market, players on illegal online gambling platforms are able to play anonymously without any restrictions. However, as the open market requires registration if you want to partake in online gambling, the retail channel will become the sole channel where players can gambling anonymously as they are not obliged to register or identify themselves during the checkout. Following this train of thought, interviewees expect a great impact on the retail channel. From an employee perspective, interviewee I explains:

“If you can only play anonymously with our brand at the retail channel, it can suddenly be that players are inclined to with us. [...] If they all come to retail, that means an accumulation of turnover, potentially. And that also means that it will become more lucrative for retailers, and that also means pushing the boundaries of what is allowed and what is not allowed.” (Interviewee I)

Hence, interviewees expect that the liberalization of the gambling market will be accompanied by more pressure on the retail channel, with a direct impact on the profitability of said channel. However, interviewees underlined the need for the company to keep a close eye on these developments as they could potentially lead to retailers pushing the boundaries of what is allowed and what is not allowed in terms of executing the responsible gaming policy.

4.6.3 Responsible Gaming within the Dutch liberalized gambling market

As previously explained, as the competition within the market will increase, competitive advertising will increase which, in turn, will lead to more players. Eventually, this could lead to a higher number of gambling addictions within Dutch society. Hence, protecting players from the negative harms of gambling products becomes increasingly important. Moreover, interviewees mention a great deal of involvement of Dutch political parties, who will pay close attention to the developments revolving around the new market. Therefore, due to this increased sense of supervision and stakeholder involvement, it is thought by internal interviewees that executing responsible gaming properly is becoming increasingly important. Moreover, interviewees share that the main corporate objective no longer refers to channeling customers to the legal offer, as due to the introduction of more licenses, various providers will be able to offer their products in a legal manner. Consequently, interviewees mention, responsible gaming is seen as a unique selling point (USP) within the new market.

Interviewee C explains:

“So the conclusion is that we will not channel to legal offers in the future, but that we will channel to the most responsible offer. Because it will all be legal soon and there will be multiple flavors of legal providers, but we will be the ones they say ‘we are safer, better’.” (Interviewee C)

Thus, responsible gaming is seen as a tool to differentiate the offer with other, less responsible competitors. All in all, it can be concluded that the value of responsible gaming in relation to the liberalization of the Dutch online gambling market is growing at a rapid pace.

5. DISCUSSION

The current research explored the notion of corporate social responsibility within the gambling sector, with the main focus on the concept of responsible gaming. More specifically, light is shed on CSR communication strategies within the gambling sector, internal and external responsible gaming practices, how the concept relates to stakeholder management strategies, how it is positioned in relation to the corporate reputation, and lastly, the future developments of RG. Due to the increasing importance of CSR within a business context, and responsible gaming within the gambling context, this research serves as a stepping stone for further exploration of the topics. Consequently, by addressing several implications throughout the current research process, this section is able to educate future researchers in the particular field of responsible gaming within the gambling sector.

5.1 Theoretical implications

The current research contributes to the scholarly field of corporate social responsibility research based on different aspects. Firstly, this research complements previous research addressing the ambiguity of CSR (e.g., Clarkson, 1995) as it aims to diminish academic confusion around the vague meaning of the word ‘social’. The current research aims to gain a deeper understanding of CSR within a specific commercial field; the gambling sector. Accordingly, by connecting the dots between CSR, stakeholder theory, and responsible gaming, new light is shed on CSR strategies within the gambling sector. Previous research within this specific research area is negligible, which leaves room for interesting new findings on CSR within this specific sector. In addition, according to Yang, Ren & Lau (2020), the reputation of the ‘sin sector’ is quite peculiar compared to other commercial sectors. Hence, this research generates valuable insights into the critical and explicit reputation strategies within the gambling sector. Moreover, as responsible gaming becomes increasingly important within the gambling sector, new insights generated from this research add value to the currently scarce academic groundwork on the specific topic.

Through qualitative methods, the current research aims to construct a holistic view of the stakeholder perspectives within the gambling sector. In turn, this research adds value to stakeholder theory as it sheds light on a specific sector that lacks thorough academic exploration. Through the use of in-depth interviews, a deeper understanding of various stakeholder perspectives is established, which can be utilized as a stepping stone for future exploration of the perspective on CSR, and responsible gaming in particular.

5.2 Managerial implications

Reaching beyond theoretical implications, this thesis also bears managerial contributions for both the gambling sector and more generally, for firms that aim to abide by social responsibilities within their corporate strategies. As CSR strategies remain ambiguous, stakeholder involvement and consistent two-way communication flows can be utilized to bridge the internal and external perceptions of how CSR should be utilized and communicated by a company. In general, companies can try to protect their reputation and create competitive advantages through engaging in proactive CSR communication initiatives and communication strategies. For the gambling sector, an explicit focus on communicating the charity contributions and the yearly remittance is crucial to create a competitive advantage, as this knowledge transfer from firm to external stakeholders is currently insufficient. Moreover, in order to generate more insights from a stakeholder's perspective, the gambling firms should consider constituting a stakeholder dialogue that allows stakeholders to reflect and share their opinions regularly. For instance, focus groups or stakeholder panels could improve internal and external relations with corporate stakeholders. In turn, the notion of responsible gaming can gain substance which could potentially lead to comprehensive internal and external communication strategies.

In addition, this research concludes that responsible gaming is seen as a valuable asset within the gambling market, yet it needs to be implemented correctly to become a unique selling point against other competitors. The positioning of responsible gaming should be considered thoroughly within the managerial levels of a corporation, especially regarding the paradoxical nature of company objectives within a gambling firm.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the theoretical framework in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and CSR communication strategies. More specifically, this research sheds light on the gambling sector, in which responsible gaming strategies are seen as the corporate take on contributing and giving back to society. Accordingly, this research was concerned with exploring a variety of stakeholder perceptions on these corporate efforts to strive for optimal responsible gambling behavior among customers. As the current academic area of expertise does not expand beyond the research on policy and market developments related to Responsible Gaming, there is a current lack of sufficient theoretical research on the stakeholder perspectives regarding these developments. Hence, the exploratory nature of this qualitative research on the perceptions and perspectives of stakeholders allowed for new and elaborate insights (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020; Babbie, 2015). With the use of an extensive in-depth interview method with internal and external stakeholders in the gambling sector, the following research question is explored: “How do CSR-based responsible gaming strategies impact the perspective of stakeholders in the Dutch lottery sector?”

Based on a qualitative analysis of stakeholder perspectives on corporate social responsibility, it can be concluded that this notion is becoming increasingly important. In general, customers and future employees expect a company to diminish their corporate footprint by giving back to society in ways that extend beyond generating profit. As derived from the data, especially generation Z emphasizes the corporate necessity of ‘doing good’. Tying this to the gambling sector, the gambling firms are more often expected to address the corporate responsibility of diminishing their corporate footprint: negative effects of products provided by the corporation, with the main negative risk being gambling addiction. Therefore, it can be concluded that the importance of responsible gaming is increasing at a rapid pace.

In addition, it can be concluded that the term responsible gaming spawns internal controversy. A primary finding highlights the existence of a duality of organizational goals. In turn, these conflicting organizational objectives result in an internal dialogue with the aim to get everyone within the company on the same page. However, by introducing valuable initiatives toward a universally established importance of responsible gaming within all departments (e.g. spreading employee knowledge, aiming to facilitate responsible gaming reporting tools, and incorporating responsible gaming targets into the business KPIs) the company aims to get everyone to understand that providing a responsible offer to the Dutch society should be priority number one. Nevertheless, getting all internal stakeholders to see eye to eye is considered a complex task for the responsible gaming department, which noted to be systematically hindered by the limited capacity of the team.

Moreover, other findings regard the external responsible gaming communication strategies. Firstly, it is found that responsible gaming is valued as a unique selling point (USP) within the corporate positioning. However, the game brands are not yet on the level of ‘breathing responsibility’. Throughout the data, several challenges regarding external communication occur, with the first being the notion that the strategies are only relevant for a small portion of the overall gambling customers, namely high-risk individuals. Hence, advertising responsible gaming to the whole customer base could result in an overabundance which will not be valued by the players. In addition, it is found that the perceived risks of a product vary among stakeholders, which should be taken into account in order to optimize responsible gaming strategies.

Another identified theme that emerged from the data is the conception of corporate reputation management strategies. An initial and potentially obvious finding entails the particular reputation of the gambling sector, which arguably does not have the public’s initial likability as their products are accompanied by mental and financial harms. Transcending this notion, the additional organizational character of being a state operation results in a dual corporate appearance, as the company is criticized for providing products with risks while simultaneously generating money for the state and charities. Hence, it is found that in order to strengthen the corporate reputation within society, interviewees view CSR as a tool to differentiate a compelling corporate story from other organizational messages. More specifically, responsible gaming is seen as a unique element that can be utilized to strengthen the corporate reputation.

In addition to the previously discussed themes, this research sheds light on stakeholder relationship management strategies within the gambling sector. Following this, a primary finding is that responsible gaming is valued as the main corporate priority among external stakeholders. However, when it comes to communication strategies, several vital stakeholders are proactively involved in the open dialogue toward responsible gaming whereas others are only involved more sporadically. Notions of initiatives to bridge this knowledge gap point out an internal transformation, from a stakeholder response- to a stakeholder involvement strategy. This final strategy is argued to delve deeper by assuming that informing and surveying the stakeholders is not sufficient, as there needs to be a systematic dialogue with stakeholders as a basis for the development of CSR initiatives (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Lastly, even though several stakeholders mention their positive attitude toward the policy, others question the practical effectiveness of the strategies toward getting customers to gamble responsibly.

A final, yet considerable theme derived from the data is the anticipated liberalization of the Dutch gambling market. The data propose several anticipated changes for the gambling market, being a. an increase in competitive providers, b. a higher total amount of players, c. a higher gambling

sensitivity of the product offer, d. an expected growth of gambling addicts in the Dutch market. More specifically, interviewees share concerns with the retail channel becoming the sole location to play anonymously, which could potentially lead to lucrative yet dubious practices within the retail channel. Finally, it can be concluded that the value of responsible gaming in relation to the liberalization of the Dutch online gambling market is growing at a rapid pace. All in all, this research aimed to contribute to the scholarly groundwork on CSR strategies within the gambling sector, highlighting the increasing importance of responsible gaming within the rapidly evolving gambling market.

6.1 Limitations of the study

With the aim to explore how stakeholders value CSR strategies within the gambling sector, this research addressed a variety of stakeholder perspectives. A primary limitation of the current research was the limited sample size of the current data set. In order to respect source triangulation with a rather small data set, it was required to cautiously select the data sources using a purposeful sampling method. As expert interviews are idealized, several internal stakeholders with responsible gaming expertise were selected in order to collect rich insightful data. Therefore, even though stakeholder representation within the data set was aspired, the researcher had the opportunity to only interview a maximum of two interviewees per external stakeholder. In addition, a choice was made to focus solely on external stakeholders with direct connection to the responsible gaming policy, as they were expected to generate knowledgeable insights. However, this research entails a limited scope of stakeholder perspectives, leaving room for future exploration of the topic according to a more extensive sample including more stakeholder perspectives.

In addition, as this research was conducted during the COVID-19 outbreak, the researcher was obliged to make an adjustment in the research scope, as various stakeholders were not able to participate in the research due to a higher workload and a change in organizational priorities. Hence, the choice was made to focus more on internal stakeholder as these relationships were established prior to the research, and these people were more likely to make time to participate. However, this results in an unavoidable imbalance of internal and external stakeholders, which could have potentially affected the overall outcomes and perspectives toward responsible gaming. Moreover, due to the COVID-19 social restraints, the interviews were obliged to be conducted through Skype, which potentially resulted in a loss of a sensed social connection compared to a face-to-face setting. In addition, this platform resulted in technical problems, which potentially affected the flow of the conversation. Nevertheless, despite the current limitations, this exploratory research generates valuable insights that can be utilized as a stepping stone for future research in relation to the concept of responsible gaming.

6.2 Future research

In order to extend beyond the current research on responsible gaming, recommendations for future research are suggested. Firstly, as the liberalization of the Dutch gambling market is expected to have a great impact on the contemporary dynamics in the sector, research on the liberalization of international gambling markets could generate insights which can be in turn utilized to effectively position responsible gaming within the Dutch gambling market. In addition, a comparative study between international gambling competitors with an established responsible gaming strategy could generate new insights and perspectives toward responsible gaming.

In addition, even though CSR has been highly scrutinized among scholars, the concept remains ambiguous and difficult to implement in corporate strategies. Within the current research, light has been shed on the conflicting company objectives, being mainly commercial objectives and societal objectives. Consequently, it is crucial that research continues to explore these internal conflicts in relation to CSR strategies, as this could lead to a more thorough understanding of corporate internal dialogues. Building on the current research, future research could investigate the potential existence of this internal conflict within other commercial fields. In turn, this allows for a better grasp of ways to implement CSR within universal corporate strategies.

Moreover, the current research explores responsible gaming in relation to specific types of gambling products, namely lottery products, and sports betting. However, as the current research addresses the potentially higher gambling addiction risks of these specific gambling products, future research could explore the notion of responsible gaming in regard to casino games. This could potentially generate new insight on the and a potentially higher significance and effects of responsible gaming strategies. Lastly, as the scope of the research was limited to a relatively small sample, future research including a sufficient quantity of each stakeholder set could result in a holistic representation of stakeholder research within the Dutch gambling market. Accordingly, including more stakeholders such as individuals from the Dutch government or the Gambling Authority, allows for more general and thorough conclusions.

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8. APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview guide

Prior to interview: Practical information

Thank you very much for participating in this research. I am Anne Floor van Beem, a Media and Business Master student from Erasmus University. At the moment I am finalizing my studies with a thesis exploring the field of CSR in relation to the lottery sector. Currently, I am working for a the Dutch Lottery, which has sparked my interest for this topic. I am very happy that you made some time to discuss this topic with me today!

Of course, we need to start this interview with some formularies. Most importantly, do you agree with the fact that I will record this interview in order to create a transcript which serves as my data to analyze? The recordings will be deleted when this transcript is complete, and the transcript will only be used for the purpose of this academic study. As an official check, have you read the consent form thoroughly, and decided whether you agree with everything stated in this form?

I will now tell you about the interview. The interview will take around 60 minutes. You are not obliged to answer any question you are not comfortable with and you can withdraw from the interview at any moment. I have prepared some questions to guide us through the interview, but please feel free to add anything you might think is valuable to discuss in relation to the topic of CSR and the lottery sector. Do you have any questions before we start this interview? I will now start the interview.

Part 1: General introduction

- Could you please introduce yourself by telling me your name, age and your profession
- How would you describe your role within the company in detail?
 - Could you elaborate on your previous and current function?
- When it comes to doing your job, can you tell me what is of high importance to you?
- What are the elements you like about your job?
- What are the elements you like about this company?

Part 2: The company and the market

- Can you explain in your own words what the company you are working for does?
- What would you say are the objectives of this company?
 - Can you explain these objectives?
 - Why are they important?
 - What is your role within the company toward achieving these goals?

- Who are the stakeholders of this company?
 - Can you briefly explain each stakeholder?
 - Do you think all stakeholders are heard and represented in the objectives of the company?
 - Do you think there is balance or a clash between stakeholder interests?
- Can you explain how the company tries to achieve these goals?
 - Can this improve in any way?

Part 3: CSR in the gambling sector

- Have you heard of the term 'Corporate Social Responsibility'?
 - When it comes to Corporate Social Responsibility, can you explain to me what this concept means to you?
 - Has the impact and importance of this term changed over the last years?
 - The term knows different elements, can you tell me which elements of CSR you find important and why?
- When it comes to your organization, what does the concept mean to the company?
 - When it comes to your colleagues within the organization, do you think the term has the same meaning for everyone?
 - Has the impact on the company of the term CSR developed over the years?
- Why is CSR important?
- How does the company aim to establish a good Corporate Social Responsibility image?
 - How does the company communicate CSR to the outside world?
 - Through what channels is this information communicated?
 - Can you give an example of ways the company communicates CSR?
 - Does the company communicate CSR strategies internally?
 - Can you again give an example?
 - Do you think the CSR communication of this corporate is sufficient?
 - Do you think all stakeholders are aware of the CSR strategies?
- How does CSR relate to brand reputation strategies of the firm?

Part 4: Perspectives toward Responsible Gaming

- Are you familiar with the term Responsible Gaming?
 - Can you explain this term in your own words?
 - What is the role of this term within this company?
 - How does this relate to your own position within the company?
- How do you think Responsible Gaming relates to the topic of CSR?
 - How is responsible gaming addressed through CSR strategies of this company?
- Do you think RG is important for this company?
- How does this company communicate about RG?
 - Can you give an external example?
 - Can you give an internal example?
- Can you tell me about potential developments of RG over the years?
- What are your expectations when it comes to the liberalization of the gambling market?
 - How do you feel about this?
 - Can you give an example of positive and negative consequences?
- How does the topic of RG relate to the previously mentioned stakeholders?
 - To whom is RG of high importance?
 - How do stakeholders (eg. employees, the gambling authority, the government) see the value of Responsible Gaming in the lottery sector?
 - In what way do stakeholders engage with the information they receive?
 - Do you think there is room for improvement when it comes to CSR strategies?

Part 4: Concluding the interview

Okay, we discussed all elements on my list. Do you think we addressed all relevant information for this research? If you have anything to add there is always room to discuss this some more. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions. Thank you so much for your time and your interesting input! This information has been really valuable for my thesis.